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FROM
FRONTIER TO PLANTATION
IN TENNESSEE
A STUDY IN FRONTIER DEMOCRACY

BY

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TO
FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER

PREFACE

THE narrative histories of the United States give but a fragmentary idea of the development of democracy in this country. This is due primarily to the fact that our Federal system is a government of limited powers, and its activities touch the lives of the people at only a few points. Narrative histories of the individual states, on the other hand, have ordinarily dealt with local politics in a local way.

Science is studied by the examination of specimens, and general truths are discovered through the investigation of typical forms. History has been studied mainly by national units, and the field is too broad to allow of minute examination. It would seem, therefore, that the study of a single state, not with an eye to its local politics but concentrating on its development as a community, should throw new light upon the growth of our democracy.

For the purposes of such a study, Tennessee offers unique advantages. It was the first state to undergo the territorial status, and was without precedent to guide it on its way. Its boundaries include the earliest organized transmontane settlements. The frontiersmen planting these settlements were therefore shackled neither by powerful precedent, nor crystallized opinion, nor petrified institutions in developing their community life. Not only were these settlements planted under striking conditions, but they were established under famous leaders. Certainly the frontier history of no western state is richer or more significant than that of Tennessee.

It is also important for the purposes of this study that

the forms of economic life to be found during the antebellum period were varied. The state was a part of the West and a part of the South. Its eastern section had a self-sustaining, small-farmer population. Its Cumberland basin was largely a grain-growing, stock-raising area, while its western section was, in all respects, a part of the cotton kingdom. It therefore affords a rare opportunity to study the political effects of these several types of agricultural economy.

Land was in the early days the chief form of wealth in the United States, and Tennessee is almost unique among western states in having had a land problem of her own. The laws passed in disposing of the public domain constitute the most significant economic legislation with which the state government had to deal, and through such legislation may be tested the living pulse of the body politic. We have been accustomed, in studying our history, to pay too much attention to what the politicians have said and too little to what they have done.

It is possibly accidental, yet no less significant, that Tennessee furnished far more than her due share of the leaders of that western democracy which grew in importance so astoundingly between the outbreak of the Revolution and the War of Secession. The activities of these men in the politics of the state give its history an importance and a significance which it would otherwise lack.

Taken together these factors render Tennessee an admirable specimen for such a type study as that which is here presented. Periods of changing conditions have been given special attention; static periods have been passed more rapidly in review.

An expression of appreciation is due to Professor Ulrich B. Phillips, of Yale University, for valuable suggestions, and to Professor J. B. Sanders, of the University of Alabama, for a critical reading of the manuscript. It is fitting that I should acknowledge here my indebtedness to Ida Robertson Abernethy, my wife, who edited and typed the entire work.

THOMAS PERKINS ABERNETHY

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CHAPTER I

WATAUGA

COLONIAL North Carolina was a huge territory sprawling back to the Mississippi and including in its boundaries all that country which now constitutes the state of Tennessee. It was not until a few years before the war for American independence that the North Carolinians turned their attention to the transmontane part of their province and it received its first white settlers. Yet none of this territory was legally open to settlement until the Revolution was well under way. In 1763 King George prohibited migration beyond the watershed separating the Atlantic rivers from those which empty their waters into the Mississippi, thus closing to colonization even the southern end of the great western Valley of Virginia.¹ This was not looked upon as a permanent arrangement, however, and in 1768 Sir William Johnson negotiated a treaty with the Iroquois Indians whereby they ceded their claim to all lands lying southward of the Ohio River.² The Cherokees had claims which overlapped those of the Iroquois, and in the same year they agreed to fix their eastern boundary by a line to run from Tryon Mountain on the southern border of North Carolina to Chiswell's Mine near the southern end of the Valley of Virginia, and from thence to the point where the Great Kanawha flows into the Ohio.³

¹ Wm. Macdonald, (ed.), *Select Charters Illustrative of American History*, p. 271.

² A. Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 191.

³ See map opposite p. 192, Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*.

These treaties would seem to have annulled the proclamation of 1763 at least in so far as lands lying east of the Cherokee line were concerned, and they were so construed by the colonists.⁴ Settlers from Virginia rushed into the newly opened territory and surveys were made in many parts of it.⁵ They went even beyond the Cherokee line and settled on the upper waters of the Holston River, which flows down the valley of East Tennessee. This land was still within the Indian country, and it actually lay within the borders of North Carolina though the line between that province and Virginia had not yet been extended so far westward and none knew just where it would fall.

In order to make provision for these settlers who had gone beyond the line of 1768, a second treaty, that of Lochaber, was negotiated with the Cherokees in 1770 and their boundary was pushed still farther back. It was now to run along the Virginia-North Carolina border to a point six miles east of the Long Island in the Holston, thence directly to the confluence of the Kanawha and Ohio rivers.⁶ This would include all the Virginia settlements, as it was intended that it should. Families in larger numbers now eagerly hurried out to the Holston Valley and took up lands under the laws of Virginia.

The Watauga River is a small stream which flows from the Allegheny Mountains and empties into the Holston from the south. On its banks there was a clearing which apparently had been made by the Indians in

⁴ L. P. Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia*, pp. 109, 116.

⁵ A. V. Goodpasture, "Why the First Settlers of Tennessee were from Virginia," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V, 229-31; J. G. M. Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, pp. 93-94, 102; Lyman C. Draper, MS. Life of Daniel Boone, III; C. W. Alvord, *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics*, II, 81-83.

remote times. This spot received the name of Watauga Old Fields, and here in 1768 was made one of the first settlements lying within the limits of the present state of Tennessee.⁷

In that year James Robertson, of Scotch-Irish descent, came over the mountains from Wake County, North Carolina, to spy out the land. He returned home during the same season and came west again with ten families of his North Carolina neighbors and kinsmen, including that of his brother Charles.⁸ Soon after these venturesome Carolinians had lighted the fires in their rude wilderness homes, other settlers were attracted to the neighborhood from Virginia. John Carter, with his son, Landon, and Valentine Sevier, with his son, John,⁹ were among the most prominent of these pioneers. The center of the Watauga settlement was at Sycamore Shoals, where Elizabethton, Tennessee, now stands.¹⁰

The oldest existing record of this migration is a letter written January 3, 1771, by Evan Shelby, a Marylander of Welsh stock, to his sons, Isaac and John, who had

⁷ James Phelan, *History of Tennessee*, pp. 5, 20-21; N. E. Hyder, "Watauga Old Fields," *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 253. See also Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., X, 92, David Campbell to Lyman C. Draper, July 20, 1846; *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, II, 204-5.

⁸ John Haywood, *History of Tennessee*, pp. 49-51; "Moses Fisk's Historical Sketch of Tennessee," *American Historical Magazine*, II, 19. Haywood gives 1771 as the date of Robertson's settlement, but Fisk wrote his account in 1816, and secured his information directly from Robertson himself. Mrs. C. F. Henly, "Maj. Charles Robertson and some of his Descendants," *American Historical Magazine*, III, 21-32.

⁹ There was another prominent James Robertson. He lived in Fincastle County, Virginia, and served under Preston in Dunmore's War. It is easy to confuse the two.

¹⁰ C. L. Hunter, *Sketches of Western North Carolina*, p. 344.

¹¹ *Colonial Records of North Carolina* (hereinafter cited as *C. R. N. C.*), IX, 825-26, John Stuart to Governor Martin, Feb. 22, 1774; K. K. White, *The Kings Mountain Men*, p. 39.

remained at the old home in Shepherdstown, Maryland.¹¹

Dr Children [wrote the wandering father] This is Too Litt you know that wee are all saffe arrived at our habitation on Holson after a Jurney of three weeks and three days upon the Road wher wee found all things in Good orders and wee Seem well satisfied with the Cuntry wee sent all our stock to the Kain wee have Just come hom from Salting them and they are now in Beter order then when wee Came from Portomack River so that our Stock will be Little cost to us more than salting of them Except halfe a Dozen Cows wee Ceep for milke and four horses wee Ceep To work the others is now [no] Expence To us wee have no news hear of any account Except That it is sartain the officers is To have their quatto [quota] of Lands upon these waters which will I hop be a means of setleing of this Cuntry with a much Better sort of People than it wood a been settled with but I always thought if the officers had their Choice they wood Sooner Chews ut hear then on the Ohio for without any Dout the advantedge hear must be more than ever Can be Expected their.

I wood Recommend it To you Both to Purchis all officers and Soldeirs Rights you Can Possible Git So that Git them to go with you to the Collonels of the Redgments and to git a proper Sartifycatt that the warrents may be obtained.

W Collonel Gaits was amenshuning To me as I was a coming out if I Cood git him proper Lockations for a Large quantidy of Land he Cood procuere a Grant for it I have sent you the Locations if he will Enter into a proper article of agreement with me that I shall have one third of the Land if the said Grants shud be optained. . .¹²

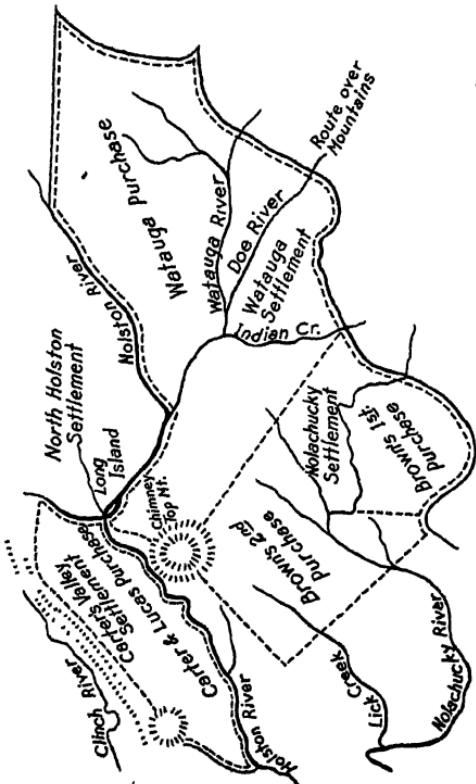
During 1772 Shelby made a journey to Frederick, Maryland, and, returning by way of Fort Pitt, brought out a stock of goods which he sold to his neighbors, including James and Charles Robertson, Daniel Boone, and Valentine Sevier. Blankets, shoes, linen, pots,

¹¹ Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, IV, 69-70; A. Henderson, "Isaac Shelby," *North Carolina Booklet*, XVI, 109-44.

¹² Draper Papers, *Kings Mountain MSS.*, XVI, 4.

sugar, and tea were among the commodities thus put upon the market.¹³

THE WATAUGA COUNTRY, 1772 - 1779.



Map showing the supposed line between Virginia and Western Territory of North Carolina from 1772 to 1779 and the two Tennessee Settlements on either side of said line in 1772; also limits of the several private purchases from the Indians by the Watauga Settlers, Jacob Brown, and Carter & Lucas in 1775.

18 *Ibid.*, XI, 7, 9, 14.

Shelby had purchased his land from the speculators who held large areas in Southwestern Virginia.¹⁴ It lay on the north side of Holston not far from the present site of Bristol. A number of wealthy and influential Virginians settled in this neighborhood, the most notable of them being Anthony Bledsoe, William Cocke, and Gilbert Christian.¹⁵

In 1769 an attempt had been made to establish a settlement to the west of these communities in Powell's Valley near Cumberland Gap. A large group of Virginia speculators, known as the Loyal Land Company, had secured extensive grants in that neighborhood long before the country was open to settlement.¹⁶ Joseph Martin, a picturesque frontier character from Albemarle County, Virginia, was promised a large concession by this company on condition that he establish a settlement upon the land. He led a band of five or six men to Powell's Valley, but on the day following his arrival a group of Indians came along and tried to take his rifle. A quarrel ensued, and the settlers, fearing retaliation from the savages, returned home.¹⁷

By 1771 several settlements were established: one north of Holston with a nucleus at the Long Island; another south of Holston at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga; and a third in Carter's Valley near the spot where Rogersville now stands. During the same year

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, X, 14, David Campbell to Draper, March 30, 1842.

¹⁵ White, pp. 79-82, quoting letter from George Christian to L. C. Draper, June 14, 1842.

¹⁶ M. M. Quaife (ed.), "The Preston and Virginia Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts," *Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Calendar Series*, I, 122, Thos. Walker to Wm. Preston, July 9, 1778; Summers, p. 266.

¹⁷ S. B. Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the West," *American Historical Association, Annual Report*, 1893, 410-11; John Redd, "General Joseph Martin," *Southern History Association Publications*, VII, 1-6.

one Jacob Brown proceeded southward from Watauga and purchased a tract upon the Nolachucky River. Here a fourth community was established. Brown claimed to believe that even this land was within the boundaries of Virginia.¹⁸

Nearly all the historians of this migration have left the impression that these first Tennessee settlements were peopled by Regulators who fled from their old homes in North Carolina after the battle of Alamance. It is said of Robertson and Boone that although they were not Regulators, they were of regulating principles.¹⁹ There is absolutely no evidence that either of these men ever gave the movement a serious thought. Robertson and his little group are the only North Carolinians of whom there is a record of migration west of the mountains as early as 1771. If men "of regulating principles" came after that time, it means nothing. The Regulation closed with Alamance. Practically all those who took part in that engagement made their submission to the governor immediately thereafter, as did six thousand who had not participated in the battle. It is stated by some writers that a few of the former Regulators appeared west of the mountains before 1776, that they were Tories and were forced by the earlier settlers to submit to the Whig cause.²⁰ Of such people a careful searching of the records has revealed no trace.²¹ The fact that the

¹⁸ *C. R. N. C.*, X, 885; Phelan, pp. 30-31; Kamsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, pp. 110-11; A. V. Goodpasture, "The Watauga Association," *American Historical Magazine*, III, 103-10.

¹⁹ Henderson, p. 190.

²⁰ *Knoxville Gazette*, April 6, 1793; Phelan, pp. 34-35.

²¹ Such evidence as has been adduced on this subject merely shows that many families left the Alamance region after the battle. It does not show where they went. *C. R. N. C.*, VII, xxxii-iii; J. S. Bassett, "The Regulators of North Carolina," *American Historical Association, Annual Report*, 1894, p. 208. There was a Regulator named Joseph Pugh; a man of the same name served in the Orange County

Tennessee settlements were Whig and that the Regulators became Tories should be sufficient evidence to show that there could have been little or no relation between the two movements.

The Indian boundary established by the treaty of Lochaber followed the North Carolina-Virginia border as far as the Holston River. It was agreed that this stream should serve as a temporary boundary between the two provinces from this point westward. The settlements north of it were administered as a part of Virginia; those south of it were in the Indian country.²²

As soon as this situation developed, the deputy Indian agent, Alexander Cameron, ordered the settlers to vacate these lands.²³ Brown complied so far as to desert his settlement and move up to Watauga,²⁴ but the people here refused to move. They appointed James Robertson to make a treaty with the Cherokees, and he and his associates leased from the Indians for a period of eight years the lands which they occupied.²⁵ Charles Robertson and his brother James acted, it is said, as

militia in 1776 (*C. R. N. C.*, X, 753-54), and one Jonathan Pugh, a sheriff of Washington County, was one of the two men killed in the struggle between the State of Franklin and North Carolina, *State Records of North Carolina* (hereinafter cited as *S. R. N. C.*), XXII, 692; Ramsey, p. 389; John Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, p. 18. Yet there might have been several men of the same name. There was a Charles Robertson and a James White who were Regulators, but they were not those men, bearing the same names, who were prominently connected with the settlement of East Tennessee. See Draper Papers, King Mountain MSS., X, 6-9, David Campbell to Draper, Dec. 12, 1840; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, I, 197-98; S. C. Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, p. 268; Ramsey, p. 103.

²² Draper Papers, Preston MSS., II, 128, Robert Doak to Wm. Preston, Nov. 20, 1771; *S. R. N. C.*, XIV, 300, 314; Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 192; C. L. Hunter, *Sketches of Western North Carolina*, p. 316.

²³ Ramsey, p. 109.

²⁴ *C. R. N. C.*, X, 885.

²⁵ Ramsey, following Haywood, p. 109; "Moses Fisk's Historical Sketch of Tennessee," *loc. cit.*, p. 20.

agents for the settlers, distributing to them the domain thus secured.²⁶ It seems doubtful whether a clear distinction was made between ownership and a lease, and there is evidence to indicate that the Robertsons proceeded as though they had bought the lands and could sell them outright.²⁷

The next step was to form some sort of government for the orphaned, isolated community, for neither North Carolina nor Virginia recognized the right of the Wataugans to live within the Indian country. They were "squatters" and without the law. They therefore called an assembly of arms-bearing men and chose a council of five to administer their public affairs. The laws of Virginia were adopted and their enforcement was entrusted to the council. The members of this body were John Carter, James and Charles Robertson, Zack Isbell, and John Sevier.²⁸ The lands here, as previously stated, had been settled under the impression that they lay within Virginia, and the fact that the laws of Virginia were adopted strongly indicates that the settlers themselves were chiefly from this colony. If geography counts for anything in the migrations of peoples, if they follow valleys rather than cross mountains, this must have been the case.

Having leased their lands from the Indians and having formed a temporary government of their own, the people of Watauga lived quietly for two years, clearing fields, hewing out their wilderness homes, and hunting through the all but impenetrable forests. The Indians left them in peace, but there is no indication that their numbers

²⁶ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 9; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 995.

²⁷ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 995.

²⁸ Ramsey, pp. 106-7; Goodpasture, "The Watauga Association," *loc. cit.*, pp. 112-16.

increased appreciably. Then, in 1774, Lord Dunmore's war broke out. The western settlers, isolated and unprotected, were profoundly agitated. The militia commanders of the frontier counties of Virginia called out their forces and dispatched a contingent under Colonel Andrew Lewis, which defeated the Shawnees at Point Pleasant. Evan Shelby enlisted a company for this campaign, and among the non-commissioned officers were James Robertson and Valentine Sevier.²⁹ Thus the Wataugans coöperated with their neighbors in protecting the frontier.

When the break with England came, the situation in the West underwent a decided change. Frontier settlements, whether within or without the law, were now a most welcome protection against the Indians who were being stirred to hostility by the British agents.³⁰ The revolutionary governments in North Carolina and Virginia were not slow to realize this fact, nor did the frontiersmen themselves fail to appreciate their opportunity. On the outbreak of hostilities, the Wataugans promptly declared their adherence to the American cause in spite of threats from Cameron and Stuart, the British agents among the Indians.³¹ They drew up a petition praying for admission to the government of North Carolina and sent it to the council of safety, the administrative body *pro tempore* of the new state. This petition was signed by one hundred and thirteen men, only two of whom had to sign by their marks. It is probable that practically all the arms-bearing men of Watauga affixed their names, and it is thus evident

²⁹ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., II, 82.

³⁰ C. R. N. C., X, 763-85; Draper Papers, Preston MSS., IV, 38, 39, 44, 45.

³¹ *Ibid.*, X, 606-7, 708-11.

that most of them could read and write. A local committee of safety was now formed in accord with the temporary system of government adopted by North Carolina, and the western settlements organized themselves in this manner as the "District of Washington."³²

The North Carolina council of safety was now ready to recognize the Wataugans, in spite of the fact that they were living upon lands to which they had no claim. It authorized them to elect delegates to the forthcoming constitutional convention, and Watauga thereafter was spoken of as the "District of Washington," the laws of North Carolina being extended over it.³³ The delegates were accordingly elected, and the remotest frontier took its part in framing the first constitution of the infant state.³⁴

This convention provided for the election of justices of the peace and the establishment of a county court in the western district. John Carter was made colonel of the district and was furnished with powder and lead. John Sevier was made lieutenant colonel, and Charles Robertson first major.³⁵ When the first legislature met under the new government, the "District of Washington" was organized as Washington County,³⁶ and a road was authorized to be laid out from the courthouse of Burke County to the house of Charles Robertson, where the court of the new county was to hold its sessions. This was the first road leading from North Carolina to the transmontane settlements, and when the frontiersmen

³² *Ibid.*, X, 702; Goodpasture, "The Watauga Association," *loc. cit.*, pp. 116-20.

³³ *C. R. N. C.*, X, 702.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, X, xxvi, 926, 951, 998, 1001.

³⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XII, 103-4; XXIII, 995; XXIV, 39-42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, XII, 395; XXIV, 141-42.

marched eastward along it to the Battle of King's Mountain, it was still a bridle path.³⁷

In the meantime there had been serious trouble with the Indians. On the outbreak of the Revolution, the Cherokees took the British side and planned an attack upon the exposed Watauga and Long Island settlements. Traders who had been living with the Indians escaped and notified the whites of the impending danger. Tradition has it that Nancy Ward, a Cherokee woman, also warned the settlers. The Indians, seeing that their plans were revealed, delayed the attack six weeks, and the respite gave the settlers time to prepare somewhat for defense.³⁸ The most exposed posts were abandoned and the defenders concentrated at the Long Island and Sycamore Shoals.³⁹ At the latter point the Watauga people built a fort and collected their forces numbering about seventy-five men and boys, poorly armed.⁴⁰ John Carter having gone eastward with the petition for governmental recognition, James Robertson took command of the garrison with John Sevier as his lieutenant. They heroically withstood a siege of six weeks.⁴¹

At the Long Island the Virginia authorities planned to concentrate an army of two thousand under command of Colonel William Christian. William Cocke, one of the early settlers in this neighborhood, claimed to own the island itself and seems to have taken the lead in establishing headquarters at that place and building a fort which was known as Eaton's Station.⁴² Such a station

³⁷ *Ibid.*, XII, 348; XV, 372-73; XVIII, 497; XXIV, 135-36; Ramsey, p. 714.

³⁸ Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the West," *loc. cit.*, p. 423; Moses Fisk, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁹ *Knoxville Gazette*, April 6, 1793.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, VII, 157; Moses Fisk, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴² White, pp. 79-82.

consisted of several log cabins or, better still, blockhouses, built in a rectangle and connected by stockades. The blockhouse differed from the ordinary log cabin in that it had two stories, the second projecting beyond the lower in order that missiles might be dropped upon Indians who should try to reach the foundations and set fire to the structure. Both lower and upper stories were provided with loopholes. The settlements made before this time had not been concentrated within such forts, but after the outbreak of the Revolution and for some years following its close, the farthest frontier could usually be inhabited only when such forts were available for protection. These fortified settlements were referred to as "stations."

Before Christian could arrive at Eaton's Station and while four hundred militiamen were concentrated there under command of Cocke, the Indians were reported to be approaching. Cocke insisted that a sortie should be made and led his men out to meet the enemy. Having marched a mile or two, they came upon the savages, who delivered themselves of their famous war-wheop. Most of the whites were so unaccustomed to Indian fighting that this vocal method of attack was entirely unknown to them. So impressed were they with its blood-curdling ferocity that they broke and ran, led by their swift commander. Cocke reached the fort in safety but somewhat out of breath. He announced that his men had been defeated. His announcement proved to be somewhat premature, however, for there were several militia captains in the force who knew something of frontier warfare, and after a time they were able to rally their men and make a stand. The result was that the Indians were repulsed, leaving fourteen of their number

slain upon the field of Long Island Flats. The frontiersmen suffered no loss—except that of the fleet-footed Cocke.⁴³

Christian arrived with his reinforcements after the battle. Joseph Martin was serving as a captain in his force. He marched with his two thousand men into the Indian country, and the natives fled before him. He burned their deserted villages and destroyed their supplies. While he was thus engaged, the Indians sent a messenger asking for peace. They were told to send commissioners to the Long Island to arrange terms.⁴⁴ At the same time that Christian and his Virginians were harrying the Indians, North Carolina sent Griffith Rutherford with a similar force on a like mission.⁴⁵ The result was that a treaty with the Cherokees was concluded the next year at the Long Island, with Waightstill Avery acting as one of the commissioners for North Carolina, and Isaac Shelby, who had joined his father in his wilderness home, commissioner for Virginia. According to this pact the Indians ceded their lands as far south as Brown's line—that is, as far as the Watauga settlements extended.⁴⁶ Thus in the year 1777 this frontier outpost received for the first time a county government and a title to the soil.

All this applied only to settlements south of Holston River. Those north of the Holston were still governed as an integral part of Virginia. Finally in 1779 plans were made for extending the line which marked the Virginia-North Carolina boundary. Richard Henderson was appointed on the part of the latter state, and Thomas

⁴³ John Redd, "General Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, pp. 73-78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-6. ⁴⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XI, xvi-xvii.

⁴⁶ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 82, Gov. Isaac Shelby on early Tennessee history; *S. R. N. C.*, XI, 566-67; Ramsey, pp. 172-75.

Walker and Daniel Smith for the former.⁴⁷ Though the commissioners presently disagreed as to the proper location of the line, they proceeded amicably so far as to show that all the Holston settlements, those north as well as those south of the river, lay within North Carolina.⁴⁸ This fact had been realized before it was thus demonstrated. For instance, in 1778 William Cocke and Anthony Bledsoe were elected from the Long Island settlements to represent Washington County in the Virginia assembly. Their election was contested on the ground that they lived south of the Virginia line, but the assembly overruled the objection and seated them.⁴⁹ Even the Watauga settlers had coöperated with the Virginia militia officials and adopted Virginia laws; but now the jurisdiction of North Carolina was definitely established over the whole area, and Sullivan County was created out of that part of it lying north of the river.⁵⁰ Settlers who had taken up lands here under the laws of Virginia were given preëmption rights by North Carolina.⁵¹ Evan Shelby was made colonel of the new county, and presently John Sevier succeeded John Carter as colonel of Washington County, North Carolina.⁵²

After the treaty of 1777, James Robertson was made Indian agent for North Carolina and went to live among the Cherokees at their village of Chota.⁵³ Joseph Martin became agent for Virginia and established his headquarters at the Long Island. According to the treaty, this island was reserved to the natives as a place for making treaties, and here Martin erected a stone ware-

⁴⁷ *Calendar of Virginia State Papers* (hereafter cited as *C. V. S. P.*), IV, 365, Arthur Campbell to Gov. Randolph, Dec. 10, 1787.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V. 19; Summers, pp. 263-66.

⁵⁰ See map, p. 5 above.

⁵¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 300.

⁵² Ramsey, p. 189.

⁵³ Weeks, "General Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, pp. 425 ff.

house. He retained his headquarters at this point long after the territory was recognized as a part of North Carolina, and that state offered no objection. Goods could be hauled by wagon at all seasons of the year as far south as the Long Island, and it therefore made an excellent center for trading. It was also at the head of boat navigation on the Holston, and consequently a place whence commerce could be carried on with all the lower valley.⁵⁴

The peace with the Indians was not long maintained, for the white settlers did not scruple to encroach on their lands. Many of those who had marched against the natives in the expedition of 1777 fancied the country they saw and soon came back to settle. By 1780 cabins were being erected as far south as the French Broad,⁵⁵ and matters came to a crisis in that year. It was during the same year that Cornwallis marched northward from South Carolina and Ferguson threatened to punish the frontier settlements for the help they had given to the Whig armies.⁵⁶ It was under these circumstances that the three frontier colonels, John Sevier, of Washington, Evan Shelby, of Sullivan, and William Campbell, of Washington County, Virginia, which was just across the line from the Holston settlements, gathered their militia and marched on their own initiative to King's Mountain.⁵⁷ Before the battle the colonels agreed among themselves as to which should receive the titular command,⁵⁸ and the engagement was fought in true frontier fashion.

⁵⁴ For wagoning provisions to Washington District, the charge at this time was one shilling, eight pence per mile, wagons carrying sixteen hundredweight.—*S. R. N. C.*, XII, 391-93; John Redd, *op. cit.*, 193-99.

⁵⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XIII, 90-91; XV, 47-48, Gov. Thomas Jefferson to Gov. Abner Nash, Aug. 12, 1780; Ramsey, pp. 170, 267, 270-72.

⁵⁶ Ramsey, p. 223.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

Men who could raise their own armies, plan their own campaigns, march under their own orders, choose their own commanders, and win their own victories without even a suggestion from continental or state authorities, were not of the same breed as those who fought the pitiful battle of Alamance. These men of the frontier knew how to lead and how to follow.

The pioneers who pushed the frontier westward were not driftwood. They were sturdy Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in this case, moving in the same stream which peopled the Valley of Virginia and the Mecklenburg area in North Carolina. At Charlotte, North Carolina, they called their academy Liberty Hall; they had striven for it long and unremittingly before gaining consent of the royal authorities.⁵⁹ The president of this institution, Dr. Alexander Craighead, had left Pennsylvania in 1749 because of his advanced views on liberty.⁶⁰ A democratic church government was likely to make democrats of Presbyterians. Therefore, it was to be expected that the people of Watauga would promptly and without question adhere to the Whig cause.

The Regulators were of an altogether different type.

The poor, shiftless men of the back country in North Carolina gradually drifted westward and filled in the lean stretches which had been left by the pioneers.⁶¹ When one speaks of frontiersmen, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between these two classes, for they

⁵⁹ S. A. Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, I, 391.

⁶⁰ J. M. Bass, "Rev. Thomas Craighead," *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 89.

⁶¹ For suggestions as to the usual "squatter" type, see *American Historical Magazine*, V, 259-60; VIII, 86. Haywood gives as one of the main reasons why men migrated to the frontier the desire to get away from the Scotch traders (pp. 49-51). He doubtless secured his evidence from personal contacts, and it is interesting on that account. It would apply, of course, not to the leaders, but to those who straggled in later to fill up the waste spaces.

all lived in much the same style at first and there was little superficial social distinction. But there was a vast difference in caliber between the two groups. One went to seek fortune, the other to escape debts or merely to live. One group bought land as soon as it was put upon the market, and often staked out claims long before that time, while the other rarely acquired property. These latter were the perpetual squatters of the back country, gradually drifting westward with the frontier. They had little active part in the grim business of pioneering, but attached themselves like parasites to the westward moving caravan, never taking root in the new soil. Often they were at odds with the law as well as with fortune.

A third and very small group about which the epic quality hangs most thickly was composed of men like Boone to whom the vast wilderness beckoned, awakening in them perhaps some distant atavistic instinct for wandering and adventure. They, too, rarely took root in the new soil, and usually could be found well beyond the last outposts of civilization.

CHAPTER II

CUMBERLAND

SPECULATION in lands was the most absorbing American enterprise during the later Colonial, the Revolutionary, and the early Republican periods. Except in the few commercial centers, there was little else in which one could speculate, and lands were enticingly available to the politicians during that era of transition. The insatiable desire for territory manifested by young and land-poor America cannot be fully comprehended unless it is understood that, in those days, the country was run largely by speculators in real estate.

In order to speculate successfully in lands, two personal elements were necessary: politicians who had weight with the government and frontiersmen sufficiently versatile to understand Indians and political manipulations as well as surveying. The latter type was invariably to be found among the militia officers of the western counties. It was they who organized the frontier for independence during the Revolution. It was they, together with the eastern politicians directing their activities, who profited most by this freedom.

In North Carolina and Virginia there were four such groups of speculators which are of especial interest in connection with the early development of the Southwest. The oldest of these was that which had its being in the Loyal Land Company of Virginia. In 1745 Colonel James Patton secured from Virginia a grant of one hundred thousand acres of western lands.¹ In 1748 he

¹ *Gulf States Historical Magazine*, II, 412.

and his son-in-law, John Buchanan, together with Dr. Thomas Walker, Major Charles Campbell, and others, made extensive explorations and surveys in connection with this grant. In 1749 the project was enlarged by the formation of the Loyal Land Company, which received a grant of eight hundred thousand acres of western lands.² Walker became the principal agent for this group and in 1750 explored its domain, discovering and naming Cumberland Gap at that time. Several other prominent western magnates, militia officers, and surveyors became connected with the company in various capacities. Among the more important of these were William Preston, Andrew Lewis, John Donelson, and Daniel Smith.³

The other Virginia group did not constitute a company nor did it enjoy any such extensive grants as those of the Loyal Company. It was held together mainly by family ties and was possessed of large ambitions. Its head was Patrick Henry—this patriot who so loved liberty loved goodly acres as well. Among members of the company was the numerous and influential western family of Campbells, one of their number, General William Campbell of King's Mountain fame, having married Patrick Henry's sister.⁴ Colonel William Christian, a famous Indian fighter of the Virginia border, who married another of Henry's sisters,⁵ also was interested in the land business of the group. Henry's active and

² L. P. Summers, *History of Southwest Virginia*, pp. 43 ff.

³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 52, Thomas Walker to Col. Daniel Smith, May 9, 1783.

⁴ C. L. Hunter, *Sketches of Western North Carolina*, p. 313; William Martin, "Frontier Life in Revolutionary Days," *Southern History Association Publications*, IV, 459.

⁵ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., X, 6-9; David Campbell to L. C. Draper, Dec. 12, 1840.

faithful agent in his western speculations was the same Joseph Martin who tried to establish a settlement in Powell's Valley under the Loyal Land Company in 1769, and who was appointed agent from Virginia to the Cherokees after the treaty of 1777.

The more important of the two North Carolina groups was controlled by William Blount. For the purposes of this chapter, however, interest centers in the other group, which was headed by Richard Henderson.

Henderson had organized a concern known as Richard Henderson and Company, which included among its members Nathaniel and Thomas Hart, Jesse Benton, and John Williams.⁶ These men had long been closely associated, all of them being from the prosperous class of Virginian settlers in Granville and Orange counties. Henderson, Benton, and Williams had been especially singled out for the hatred of the Regulators.

The proclamation of 1763 had forbidden settlements beyond the Atlantic watershed, and it also had specifically forbidden the purchase of lands from the natives by private parties. Yet the treaties of Fort Stanwix and Hard Labor which were negotiated in 1768 were generally construed by the speculators as reopening the field of western enterprise. Many surveyors rushed at once into the back country. In 1769 Henderson employed Daniel Boone, while hunting on his own account, to prospect for desirable tracts for settlement.⁷ It was during the previous year that James Robertson had explored the Watauga and conducted his little band of North Carolinians to the new country. Numerous

⁶ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, pp. 107 ff.; J. P. Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, p. 86.

⁷ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 108; E. D. Hicks, "Statements of Historians Corrected," *American Historical Magazine*, I, 134-39.

Virginians were soon pouring into the Holston Valley.

Boone remained in the Kentucky region for two years and, after various picturesque experiences, returned to civilization in 1771. It appears that he went back to his home on the upper Yadkin. Historians seem to have lost track of him from that time until 1773. But he was not idle during this interval. On his extended tour of 1769-1771, he became acquainted with James Robertson, if, in fact, the two were not previously known to each other.⁸ As they were the only two North Carolinians known to be prospecting in that country during those years, as the way was a long and devious one not easily to be followed by the shiftless wanderer, and as there are strong indications that Robertson not only had some backing and influence but also some accurate knowledge of the exact state of the land business in the distant region to which he traveled, it is not unlikely that the explorations of these two men were, in some way, connected.

When the Wataugans in 1772 disconcertingly found themselves outside the bounds of Virginia and under the necessity of obtaining their lands from the Indians and forming a temporary government, it is improbable that they had the capital with which to make the purchase, for they were obscure pioneers who had gone out to the frontier to better their fortunes. When Boone returned from his tour in 1771, Henderson commissioned him as agent for the company in buying western lands.⁹ Boone was back in Watauga in 1772 and wrote to Henderson regarding the Watauga compact.¹⁰ Robert-

⁸ A. Henderson, "Richard Henderson," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, II, 158; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., VI, 65; V, 49.

⁹ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 159.

¹⁰ L. C. Draper, MS. Life of Boone, III, 268-69; Putnam, *History of Middle Tennessee*, p. 26.

son, with a certain John Boone, was commissioned by the Watauga settlers to secure their lands from the Indians, and a quantity of goods was necessary to pay for the eight-year lease. After having secured the lands, James Robertson and his brother Charles disposed of them to the settlers.¹¹ It is not a conclusive case, but it does seem highly probable that Henderson furnished the capital and Boone and Robertson furnished the management. And this seems even more plausible in connection with subsequent developments.

All this occurred during the time Henderson was being attacked by the Regulators at Hillsborough and while the battle of Alamance was being fought. The "regulating principles" of Boone and Robertson do not appear.

Boone spent much time in the Holston country for several years following 1771. In 1773 he made his first unsuccessful attempt to lead a colony of settlers from Holston to Kentucky. In 1774 he was engaged in Dunmore's war under Colonel William Preston and had command of three of the Clinch Valley forts.¹² Being retained on garrison duty, he did not take part with Colonel Andrew Lewis in the battle of Point Pleasant, but this campaign so stimulated interest in Kentucky that Boone advised Henderson the time was ripe for making an extensive purchase of western lands from the Indians.¹³ This idea occurred to Patrick Henry at the same time, but the difficulties with England came on apace causing the Virginia patriot to give up, for the present, the idea of a Kentucky speculation.¹⁴

¹¹ See Chapter I.

¹² R. S. Cotterill, *History of Pioneer Kentucky*, p. 74.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁴ *C. V. S. P.*, I, 309-10, deposition of John Floyd; I, 289-90, deposition of Patrick Henry.

Henderson had approached Henry in regard to a combination of interests,¹⁵ and Arthur Campbell had given Henderson to understand that Henry was favorably inclined toward such a coalition.¹⁶ When Henry abandoned the idea of a Kentucky speculation, Henderson decided to carry on without him. He made a journey into the Indian country and discussed with the Cherokees the possibility of a purchase. He found them agreeable to such a transaction and arranged for a treaty to be held the following year at the Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga.¹⁷ The Henderson Company was now reorganized, first as the Louisa, and finally as the Transylvania Company. Boone was employed as its agent for getting the Indians together for the treaty.¹⁸

Accordingly in 1775, at Sycamore Shoals, the Transylvania Purchase was made. The distinguished jurist proved himself no mean hand at barter and trade. For a cabin full of goods Henderson and his associates purchased most of Kentucky and the better part of Middle Tennessee from the Cherokees.¹⁹ The Watauga settlers, whose leaders attended the treaty, now bought the lands which they had formerly leased.²⁰ In fact, John Carter and William Cocke, prominent Wataugans, were associates of Henderson in his purchase.²¹

It was just at this time Joseph Martin decided, apparently without the collaboration of Henderson, to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 303-4, deposition of Arthur Campbell.

¹⁷ *Calendar of Preston Papers*, pp. 99, 101; Draper, MS. Life of Boone, III, 165.

¹⁸ C. R. N. C., X, 286; Draper, *op. cit.*, III, 165; Cotterill, *op. cit.*, p. 74; J. P. Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, p. 91.

¹⁹ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 221; Ramsey, p. 117.

²⁰ Draper, *op. cit.*, III, 171; C. V. S. P., I, 385-86, deposition of James Robertson; pp. 291-92, deposition of Charles Robertson; pp. 296-97, deposition of Isaac Shelby.

²¹ S. C. Williams, "Henderson Purchase," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V, 10-12.

reoccupy the station he had abandoned in Powell's Valley in 1769. He led out a company of sixteen or eighteen settlers and established his post near Cumberland Gap; but seeing that he was on land claimed by Henderson—though he had a previous claim under the Loyal Land Company—he became an agent of Henderson and held the lands under him.²² When the Revolution broke out, the danger of Indian depredations caused the post to be abandoned a second time.

The Transylvania Purchase was in direct violation of the proclamation of 1763. Henderson was denounced by the governors of Virginia and North Carolina,²³ but he was willing to fish in troubled waters. It is even possible that he already foresaw the approaching struggle with England and knew possession to be nine points of the law, particularly in time of revolution and on the frontier.

It is true, too, that the Cherokees did not own the land they sold. It had been used as a common hunting and fighting ground by the Indians, and the Chickasaws also claimed a part of it.²⁴ Possession with the consent of the Indians was the company's sole aim. They knew that the question of title would have to be settled later, but the occupier always had the advantage in such a controversy. They promised to secure the colonists in their holdings and proposed to charge two shillings quitrent per hundred acres after 1780.²⁵ The Transylvania

²² Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 8, William Johnson to Joseph Martin, July 12, 1775; John Redd, "General Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, pp. 1-6, 73-78; S. B. Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the West," *loc. cit.*, pp. 417-18.

²³ Draper Papers, Newspaper Extracts, II, 246; *Calendar of Preston Papers*, p. 102, John M. Dunmore to Preston, March 21, 1775; *C. R. N. C.*, IX, 1169-70.

²⁴ *American Historical Magazine*, II, 346-51.

²⁵ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 221.

Company was accused of requiring the colonists to recognize the sovereignty as well as the proprietorship of the company.²⁶ This charge was denied, but it was admitted that, though the settlers were permitted to establish a representative form of government in Kentucky, the proprietors retained a veto upon their acts.²⁷

The Transylvania colony in Kentucky was no sooner established than the movement for American independence began to take shape. On September 25, 1775, the proprietors appealed to the Continental Congress for recognition of their territorial and political status. This appeal was not heeded.²⁸ Virginia was next applied to, but Patrick Henry and George Rogers Clark succeeded in inducing the assembly to deny the Henderson petition.²⁹ An investigation was held by that body, some damaging facts were brought out, and in 1778 Virginia declared that the Henderson purchase did not vest in the company a title to the soil.³⁰ Nevertheless the Indian claim was, somewhat inconsistently, held to have been extinguished by the purchase and the company was granted a tract of 200,000 acres by way of compensation.³¹ This tract was later located on the Ohio near the mouth of Green River, and in 1782 the proprietors offered it for sale.³²

Thus in 1778 Henderson and his associates were left with only a small area to which they could lay claim in Virginia; consequently they decided to turn their attention to that part of their purchase which lay south

²⁶ *C. V. S. P.*, I, 307-9, deposition of James Douglas.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 305-7, deposition of Nathaniel Henderson.

²⁸ *C. R. N. C.*, X, 256 ff.

²⁹ *C. V. S. P.*, I, 271-72.

³⁰ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 278.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

³² Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 86, advertisement from *Maryland Journal*, Feb. 19, 1782.

of the Virginia line, including the basin of the Cumberland River in what is now Middle Tennessee.

In 1778 John Donelson, a prominent surveyor of southwestern Virginia, owner of iron mines in that region, and a militia colonel, wrote to Colonel William Preston that he was planning to move to the westward.³³ In the spring of 1779 James Robertson resigned his Indian agency and made a journey of exploration to the Cumberland country. He planted a crop of corn near the French Lick, where Nashville now stands.³⁴ In the fall of that year a double expedition set out from the Holston settlements for the new country. Donelson, in the boat "Adventure," conducted a flotilla of about forty craft down the river. Under cover of the women and children, they expected to pass the dangerous Indian settlements of the Chicamaugas in safety.³⁵ Henderson was to meet them in the neighborhood of Muscle Shoals and conduct them overland to their destination on the Cumberland, but he failed to make the rendezvous and the flotilla proceeded all the way to the French Lick, arriving in the spring of 1780.³⁶

Robertson had preceded them to that point by several months. With a small party of men he passed along Boone's Wilderness Trail through the Cumberland Gap. Reaching the upper waters of the Cumberland, he followed the course of that stream and arrived at the bank opposite the Lick on Christmas Day, 1779.³⁷ The horses, cattle, and sheep, making a considerable herd,

³³ *Calendar of Preston Papers*, p. 122; Appleton, *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, III, 384.

³⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XIV, 246-49, Robertson to Caswell, Jan. 14, 1779.

³⁵ *Draper Papers*, Tennessee MSS., VI, 62, John Carr to L. C. Draper, Oct. 10, 1854.

³⁶ Ramsey, pp. 197-202.

³⁷ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 282.

were driven through the forest by this party.³⁸ Robertson's young son, Jonathan, then ten years old, was pressed into service to aid in driving the livestock instead of making the journey by boat with the women and other children. The youthful pioneer had much difficulty with a wily old ram which took frequent and unexpected excursions into the hills, thereby forcing him to dismount and pursue on foot. When he had got the recalcitrant back on the trail, the party was miles ahead. Nothing dismayed the sturdy little pilgrim showed true pioneering qualities. Day after day he rode alone for miles through the vast and trackless wilderness, reaching camp several hours late each evening.³⁹

When the party reached the Cumberland they found the stream frozen over—a rare occurrence then and now—and were able to cross on the ice.⁴⁰ They at once began the construction of log cabins for the reception of the families who were coming down the river, but in spite of their best efforts, it was a bleak scene which greeted the voyagers when they arrived in April.⁴¹

Three hundred settlers came in these expeditions of 1779 and 1780.⁴² Seven "stations" or forts were built along the Cumberland, with the center of the community at the French Lick. The Lick itself was a sulphur spring rising in the low ground near the river, where the Nashville baseball park, known as "Sulphur Dell," is now located. One of the stations, called the "Bluff Fort," was erected on the high ground overlooking the river just above the Lick. Freeland Station was situated on the opposite side of the Lick and about a mile distant from

³⁸ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., VI, 49-50, Felix Robertson to L. C. Draper; *Ibid.*, p. 50, Mrs. Craighead's memoirs of her father, James Robertson.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 49-50, 96.

⁴⁰ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 282.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 283-84.

⁴² Putnam, pp. 208, 337 ff.

the Bluff. Eaton's Station was on the other side of the river approximately two miles downstream from the Bluff.⁴³ These neighboring forts were hidden from each other by the luxuriant growth of cane which covered the intervening land, and the Bluff, where lime rock cropped plentifully out of the ground, was covered with cedars.⁴⁴ The Cumberland then flowing past these little stockaded groups of cabins was clear and limpid, unlike the turbid stream which today eats its way through its limestone banks.

John Donelson made a clearing at Clover Bottom about twelve miles distant from the Bluff and adjoining the Hermitage site, future home of his daughter, Mrs. Andrew Jackson. Here he planted a crop, including the first cotton ever grown in Middle Tennessee. When he went in the fall to gather the harvest, his party was driven away by the Indians with two casualties.⁴⁵

While this settlement was being established, Richard Henderson was in the forest surveying the westward extension of the line between Virginia and North Carolina. It is noteworthy that the two states should have chosen this particular time to define their western boundaries just after Henderson's claim had been set aside by Virginia and while he was busy establishing a colony on his North Carolina claim. It is still more significant that Henderson himself was chosen commissioner on the part of North Carolina to make the survey. Virginia, on her part, chose Thomas Walker and Daniel Smith. Each state thus entrusted her interests to her most active western speculators, thinking, no doubt, that interested parties would be the most zealous partisans. The line was to take a due west course from

⁴³ Phelan, p. 120; Ramsey, p. 196.

⁴⁴ Putnam, pp. 337 ff.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 622.

the point where the previous boundary reached the Holston, and one would suppose that experienced surveyors would have no difficulty in marking it. But complications arose when Henderson saw that Cumberland Gap would fall on the Virginia side. If his Cumberland settlements also should fall within the Virginia border, the survey would prove the graveyard of his ambitions. Therefore, to insure his settlements falling on the proper side, he insisted that Walker was running the line too far south, and, separating from him, surveyed a second line farther northward. On passing the Cumberland Mountains, he realized that his fears were groundless and that Walker's line would lie north of the Cumberland settlements. He accordingly discontinued his separate survey,⁴⁶ but his action resulted in a disputed boundary between the two states for many years.

When he quitted the survey, Henderson repaired to his new settlement whither he had already sent a badly needed supply of corn from the Kentucky colony,⁴⁷ for he was not only the lawgiver, but the source of food and supplies for his people. He now proceeded to establish a government for the Cumberland colony. Articles of agreement were drawn up in Henderson's hand and signed by him and his charges. They provided that a committee of guardians should be chosen by the election of two members from each station. James Robertson became the head of this committee.⁴⁸

This simple government did not function for long. Henderson departed, and the settlers were left to shift for themselves. This was the darkest period of the war in North Carolina, and the Company was unable to

⁴⁶ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 365, Arthur Campbell to Gov. Randolph, Dec. 10, 1787.

⁴⁷ Henderson, *Conquest of the Old Southwest*, p. 284.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 285-87.

render further assistance to the Cumberland people. The Indians made life hazardous for them from the beginning. Fields could be cultivated only when riflemen stood guard over the tillers of the soil. But game was plentiful in the woods, and meat was almost the only article of diet for the first few years.

It was under these circumstances that the supply of powder ran low, and the very life of the settlement was endangered thereby. Robertson volunteered to go alone through the forest to Kentucky and bring back the essential ammunition. It was an undertaking fraught with utmost peril, but the stout-hearted pioneer accomplished it successfully.⁴⁹ On the very night after his return to Freeland's Station, prowling Indians succeeded in forcing open the stockade gate without awakening the garrison. Robertson was aroused just as the savages entered the enclosure and the startled defenders were able to repel the attack because of his timely warning.⁵⁰ Once before, in the early days of Watauga, he had made a perilous journey into the Indian country in order to protect the settlement.⁵¹ James Robertson had none of the dashing theatricality of John Sevier, none of the homely wit of Crockett, none of the picturesque bluster of the domineering Jackson, but withal he was as splendid a figure as the frontier produced. He played his rôle well in the great drama of the wilderness, and, unlike many who had a part therein, was not interested solely in what he could turn into the recesses of his strong-box. But for his persistent determination in the face of disheartening circumstances, the Nashville settlement would have been abandoned during the dark days of 1782. No new colonists came out, and of the

⁴⁹ Phelan, pp. 124-25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

three hundred who had arrived in 1779-1780, only a few remained. All the stations except the three in the vicinity of the Bluff were deserted,⁵² and at one time there were only twenty-one fighting men available for defense. The government ceased to function and an attack made upon a Spanish fort at Ozark by Indians under the Chickasaw chief Colbert was laid at the door of the settlers by the governor of Virginia.⁵³ They were even accused of being lawless men hiding out in the forest in order to escape justice.⁵⁴

When finally in 1783 their prospects began to revive and the permanence of the settlement became assured, Henderson had passed from the picture and William Blount had, in a measure, taken his place.

⁵² Putnam, pp. 161, 195.

⁵³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 63, V, 148; "Records of the Cumberland Association," *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 134; "The Correspondence of General James Robertson," *American Historical Magazine*, I, 75-76; Putnam, pp. 185-86; *C. V. S. P.*, III, 511-12.

⁵⁴ Putnam, pp. 185-86, 215.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW FREEDOM

WHILE the settlement of the western country was going forward, the political pot was boiling in the east. The first division among the Patriots in North Carolina had occurred in connection with the framing of the state constitution. The men from the eastern part of the state who were supposed on that occasion to favor aristocratic institutions were known as Conservatives; and the western leaders who were supposed to favor democratic institutions were known as Radicals; while a group of gentry from Virginia who lived in the Roanoke Valley region stood politically, as they did geographically, a connecting link between the two factions. It is generally believed these factions remained intact after the adoption of the constitution and that the new issue which arose to divide them was the question of the confiscation of Tory property.¹

This view is substantially correct. Yet the situation was not so simple as it would thus appear. There were no real parties in North Carolina during the Revolution, nor was there any real stability to the factions which formed around specific issues. Contemporaries and historians stressed the issues of the constitution and confiscation and made these questions tests of party affiliation. It is true that the alignment on these two

¹ Ashe says there were no party divisions during this period and refers to the election of both Radicals and Conservatives to office in support of his view (I, 643-44). But both Johnston and Iredell said that the Radicals controlled at this time (Ashe, I, 585; McRee, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell*, I, 373). The election of officials clearly showed the preponderance of the western group.

issues was much the same, though not strictly so. It is also true that other and equally important issues divided the leaders in quite a different manner, but these issues, being less obvious, have been overlooked.

Conservative politicians were not always so illiberal in their views as has been supposed. Nor were the Radicals always so progressive as they were reputed to be. It was natural that the educated men of the trading centers along the coast could not see the wisdom of turning the new government over to a thoroughly illiterate majority, nor of confiscating the property of their friends and relatives who had remained faithful to the British government when the break came.² These men were usually possessed of fairly definite convictions and of culture and education. William Hooper, their leader, was a Harvard graduate, having ranked first in the class of 1760. On the other hand, the leaders of the west who essayed to give voice to the will of the people were often uneducated and more often unscrupulous. In return for votes they frequently offered something which had the face of liberty but the body of corruption. They exploited democracy in the name of the people and took their pay in the public lands.

With these facts in mind, it is desirable to review briefly the political history of North Carolina during the six years which elapsed between the adoption of her first constitution and the termination of the Revolution. By this means the true nature of the new freedom and the quality of its democracy may be discovered. For this purpose it is essential to consider the differences of opinion aroused by the questions of taxation, confiscation, and the public lands.

² I. S. Harrell, "North Carolina Loyalists," *N. C. Historical Review*, III, 584 ff.

The same legislature which extended governmental recognition to Watauga passed an act opening a land office in each county of the state, and it was provided that six hundred forty acres should be granted to every adult male citizen at a price of fifty shillings the hundred acres. He might have an additional hundred at this price for his wife and each child. Under certain conditions a total of a thousand acres might be entered, but the price of the additional acreage was to be at a higher rate. Preemption was granted to those settlers who had taken up residence upon the lands of the late Lord Granville after his death and the closure of his land office in 1763.³ This provision should have converted many of the former Regulators from their Toryism, but it does not appear to have had that effect.

Immediately after this act had passed its third reading in the house, Willie Jones, friend of Jefferson and aristocratic leader of the Radicals, arose and moved that it be amended by adding a clause which had originally been inserted by the senate but stricken out by the house. This clause provided that nothing in the act should be so construed as to debar persons claiming lands by Indian cession from the privilege of having their claims tried by jury or from presenting their cause before the legislature.⁴ Thomas Person, friend of the former Regulators and philosophical Radical, entered an objection to this move on the basis of its irregularity and because, he said, it was made at the behest of the senate and tended to favor monopolies.⁵ Thomas Hart, a partner in the Henderson Company, was then a member of the senate, and there can be little doubt that the

³ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 43-48; Haywood, pp. 68-70; Ashe, I, 320.

⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XII, 407-8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XII, 408-9.

amendment was intended to apply particularly to the Henderson claim, though the fact that this claim included lands in North Carolina seems not to have been generally known at the time. Certainly the bill was advocated with more emphasis and fought with more vehemence than an abstract question of justice usually arouses, and the stir it created points unmistakably to some powerful interest manipulating the affair. Notwithstanding the lusty protest of Person and those voting with him, the amendment was adopted and incorporated in the act. It is significant that most of the votes cast in the senate against this proviso came from members of the western counties, that of Griffith Rutherford being among the number.⁶ It was supported in the house by such men as John Sevier, William Hooper, Thomas Burke, and many other Conservatives.⁷ With Willie Jones and Thomas Person leading the forces on opposite sides, it would be absurd to suppose that party alignments had anything to do with the question.

Except for this amendment, the land act appears to have been intended to benefit the settler rather than the speculator. However, a loophole was found in it which the speculators were quick to see. The boundary of Washington County had been drawn to include the whole of the present state of Tennessee, and most of this territory lay west of the Indian line as established by the recent treaty of Long Island. The senate passed resolutions urging the survey of this boundary and forbidding settlers going beyond it;⁸ but the house refused to consent that a survey should be made before the next session of the legislature.⁹ The result was that

⁶ *Ibid.*, XII, 219.

⁸ *Ibid.*, XII, 238.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XII, 408.

⁹ *Ibid.*, XII, 431, 449.

this delay gave land-hungry men time to rush to the new country, and over a million acres were soon entered in territory to which the Indians had never given up their claims.¹⁰

The indications are that the senate leaders were trying to protect Henderson's claim by excluding competing claimants, while leaders in the house apparently were willing to throw open the enormous expanse of Washington County to a free-for-all speculation despite the Indian title. It is likely that these possibilities, however, were not realized by the majority of the members of either body. The evidence does not warrant accusing the legislature of having engaged in land jobbing. The possibilities of the situation had not been fully revealed as yet, but it afforded a rich vein to be tapped in future.

The same legislature acquired a claim upon the gratitude of the people when it passed an act abolishing the old colonial system of the poll tax and imposed a new tax on property, both real and personal, according to value.¹¹ Thus one of the worst abuses of the royal government was abolished and the citizens were now, for the first time, called upon to support the government according to their means rather than at a flat rate for rich and poor alike.

The third noteworthy act of this legislature was one confiscating the property of all who refused to support the Patriot cause, but a year's grace was allowed in which the disaffected might make their submission and thereby avoid the penalties of the law.¹² Though this legislation is deserving of no great praise, a revolu-

¹⁰ H. D. Whitney, *Land Laws of Tennessee*, p. 51. Records of certain entries made under this act by the Shelby family are to be found in the Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., V, 12 ff.

¹¹ Ashe, I, 573; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 6.

¹² *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 213-14.

tionary government could scarcely have done less—it might have done more.

Despite its good work, the truly conservative Samuel Johnston could see little to commend in this first legislature of the state of North Carolina. He wrote to his friend Thomas Burke of his disgust at seeing such men as Thomas Person, Griffith Rutherford, and John Penn at the head of affairs, "who by their low arts have worked themselves into the good graces of the populace." "I am still of opinion," he stated, "that your plan [of legislation] will by no means be attended with those salutary ends which were in contemplation by its framers."¹³ At the time this plan of government was under discussion, Burke had written to John Adams for advice, and Adams had advocated manhood suffrage while Johnston believed that the property qualification required of senatorial electors was one of the few good points written into the constitution.

The legislature of 1778 was as liberal as that of 1777 had been. It lost no time in passing an act to invalidate all land entries made within the Indian reservation.¹⁴ Another statute provided that peaceable possession for seven years should serve to bar an adverse claim.¹⁵ Provision also was made for carrying out the confiscation act of the previous year. County committees were established to administer its provisions, and it was arranged that all personal property and slaves confiscated from Loyalists should be sold, while real estate should be rented by the year. A part of such estates was reserved for dependent families, but debts due to Tories could be discharged by making payment to the commission-

¹³ Ashe, I, 578-79; *S. R. N. C.*, XI, 504.

¹⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XIII, 115-16; XXIV, 160-61.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 214-15.

ers.¹⁶ Many prominent politicians now seized the opportunity to discharge specie obligations at much less than their face value.¹⁷

In 1779 a new confiscation act provided that all forfeited lands should be sold at auction and paid for in continental and state bills, which were rapidly depreciating in value.¹⁸ John Sevier and others found the Tory lands a promising investment for the depreciated currency which they had on hand or could secure.¹⁹

The final stroke of the legislature of 1779 was to modify the system of taxation to the extent of reviving the poll tax. The ad valorem property tax was retained, but unmarried men who owned less than four hundred dollars worth of property were to pay a poll tax equal to the property tax on that amount, and married men were to pay a capitation equal to the tax on one hundred dollars worth of property in case they owned less than that amount.²⁰ This practically amounted to a tax on poverty.

Political conditions had not improved since 1777. The change would indicate the decline in the influence of Person and the increase in that of Henderson and his associates and backers. But, whatever the cause, it is clear that the first fruits of liberty were being consumed by the serpent of greed and speculation.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 123-24.

¹⁷ Harrell, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

¹⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 263-68; Ashe, I, 600; McRee, I, 415, 419.

¹⁹ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., II, 121. John Sevier to James Glasgow, June 1, 1795. On Oct. 3, 1779, Anthony Bledsoe wrote to Evan Shelby: "If you can, bring me two warrants of 500 from the Registers Office & it will be acknowledged as a singular favor & in case you draw the money from the Treasurer if you will bring me four I shall glad & it will be doing no injustice to the Publick as I have advance a considerable sum of my own money to the Public use. . . ." Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., II, 43.

²⁰ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 257-58.

In 1780 the situation assumed a new aspect. Richard Caswell had served three consecutive terms as governor—the limit under the constitution—and Abner Nash was elected to fill his place. Abner was brother to Francis Nash, a general in the continental service, who had been killed in battle just before this time. Nashville on the Cumberland was presently named to perpetuate his memory. Governor Nash was an eastern man with western principles, of the Caswell type but without Caswell's ability. It was not his election, but the victory of Cornwallis at Camden which changed the situation in 1780.

The march of the British army from Camden to Guilford Court House threw the land question into the background and brought the military question to the fore. Caswell was momentarily discredited by his flight with Gates from Camden; Nash proved incompetent and his powers were taken over largely by a military board.²¹ The North Carolina troops were placed for the time being under command of General Smallwood,²² of Maryland. Neighborhood warfare flared up in the old Regulator district between Whig and Tory and the government ceased to function in a number of counties.²³ The power of the Radicals was perilously shaken and drastic steps had to be taken to save the situation.²⁴

An act passed for filling the continental battalions of the state provided that each soldier who served his full enlistment of three years should receive a prime slave and two hundred acres of land. The grant was to be located in that part of the western country which lay

²¹ J. H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina from 1584 to 1851*, II, 196 ff.

²² Ashe, I, 627-28; McRee, I, 396.

²³ *Ibid.*, I, 704; II, 2; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 376-77.

²⁴ W. E. Dodd, *Nathaniel Macon*, p. 34.

north of the Tennessee River and west of Cumberland Gap.²⁵ Though no mention was made of Henderson's claim, this was the first act of the North Carolina legislature which directly undermined it, and it was passed within a year after the erection of the first cabins on the bluff where Nashville was to rise.

Another act of the same legislature provided that, on account of the "unsettled state of public affairs," the execution of the confiscation act should be suspended for a year.²⁶ The speculators were losing ground.

In 1781 Dr. Thomas Burke, a hot-headed Irishman, was elected governor. He was a philosophical liberal; yet, in spite of his democracy, he succeeded in retaining the respect of the doughty Samuel Johnston—something that Person had never had. His strength lay in his ability to work with both factions, and his election was certainly a victory for liberalism. But the state was overrun by the British during his administration and he himself captured and taken to Charleston. He escaped from prison and returned to North Carolina, but his political career was eclipsed by these unfortunate events.²⁷ The military situation absorbed too much attention to admit of any constructive legislation during this period, but the enforcement of the confiscation act was suspended for yet another year.²⁸ Furthermore, the land offices created by the act of 1777 were now closed and all the public domain was thus withdrawn from the market.²⁹

By the time the next gubernatorial election came round, the war clouds had lifted and political life had returned to its earlier channels. Caswell regained, at

²⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 337-39.

²⁷ Ashe, I, 694-95, 706 ff.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 400.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 352-53.

²⁹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 476-77.

least partially, his prestige; but, feeling perhaps that he was not yet strong enough to be elevated again to the chief magistracy, he threw his influence to Alexander Martin of Guilford and secured his election.³⁰ Martin was a western man with speculating principles and a good team-mate for Caswell. The two were sometimes rivals for office, but they usually worked in harmony, for their ideas on the public lands and such economic problems were the same.

The question of the confiscation of Tory property was now resurrected. It was enacted that all property taken from Loyalists under the acts of 1777 and 1779 should be put up at auction and sold on credit within a strictly limited time, and the sale should not be suspended until all property was disposed of. This applied to real estate as well as to slaves and personal property.³¹ Considering the disordered state of the currency and the confusion consequent upon the invasion of 1781, it can readily be seen that this throwing of such an enormous amount of property upon the market and forcing its sale within so brief a time was not intended for the benefit of the public treasury, but for that of the speculators in depreciated notes.

Such was the work of Caswell and Martin. But they were not yet done. It remained to carry out the provisions of the act of 1780 for remunerating the soldiers of the continental line. It was now provided that a private should receive six hundred forty acres of western land, and, according to a graduated scale, the amount rose rapidly for the different grades. A colonel was to receive seven thousand two hundred acres. The equality of man was not recognized even in those halcyon days. Isaac

³⁰ Ashe, I, 641-42, 712 ff.

³¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 424-29.

Shelby, Anthony Bledsoe, and Absalom Tatum were appointed to survey the land for the claimants, and preëmption was granted for six hundred forty acres to all such as had settled within the military district before the passage of the act of 1780, which had originally set aside this territory for the present purpose.³² Henderson was again omitted from mention, but the lands he claimed were thus definitely appropriated for another purpose. The settlers whom he had planted upon them were granted a title under state law and the speculating Judge dropped out of their firmament.

The consideration which this measure manifested for the continental soldiers was admirable enough of itself, but the speculating magnates knew that many of the veterans would find little use for their land warrants and that they could be bought at a modest price. A considerable trade in this line of business sprang up at once and flourished for many years. In an agreement entered into between Isaac Shelby and Alexander Moore, September 17, 1782, it was stipulated that the former was to secure certain claims within the military district, for which he was to be paid in goods delivered by the latter at his residence upon the Holston.³³ Shelby, as surveyor of the military district, would have unrivaled opportunity for approaching the claimants and buying their warrants.

³² *Ibid.*, XXIV, 419-22.

³³ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., II, 44.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT LAND GRAB

WITH the return of peace, the politicians were able at last to carry on operations with a large hand. The Revolution in North Carolina had been mainly a local partisan war—Whig against Tory, neighbor against neighbor—and the Patriots had won a bitter struggle. Freedom had been attained by their efforts and they deserved well of their country. Why should they not profit by their victory? The majority of them were in no doubt on this question and were resolved to exact the debt of gratitude their country owed them.

The terms “Radical” and “Conservative” had been applied ever since the division on the constitutional question of 1776, and they continued to be used until the question of the Federal constitution arose, when the Radicals became the “Anti-Federalists” and the Conservatives the “Federalists.” There was a certain continuity of alignment during all these years, and the business of the confiscation of Tory property served to divide the two groups in the interval between the struggles over the adoption of the state and Federal constitutions. Yet, as explained in the previous chapter, there was no regular party organization throughout this period. Prominent men often pursued an independent course, and on many important issues the alignment cut quite across that which obtained on the constitutional and confiscation issues. This was notably true during 1783 and 1784.

Samuel Johnston, a lawyer of Edenton, dignified and straightforward though undemocratic, was universally recognized as the leader of the Conservatives. James Iredell was his brother-in-law and devoted admirer. This young lawyer and patriot was of English birth, able, ardent, and honest. Joseph Hewes, a merchant of Edenton and a free-thinker, was a close friend of both these men, and the three of them were at the center of a strong political connection.¹

At Wilmington there was another small group of Conservatives similar to and allied with the Edenton coterie. William Hooper, a lawyer from Boston, was its leader. His brother George had taken the Tory side and married the daughter of Archibald Maclaine, a prominent merchant and Conservative politician of the same community. Cornelius Harnett, lawyer and philosophical liberal, but a Conservative in politics, completed the Wilmington trio.²

These two groups, together with Allan Jones and a few other of the Roanoke Valley Virginian families, furnished the leadership of the North Carolina Conservatives. The lawyers and merchants of the coastal towns were only moderately wealthy, and some of them, at least, were self-made men. The Roanoke Valley contingent, on the other hand, included some of the wealthiest slaveholders in the state. On the whole, these men were not unaffected by the ideas of political liberalism which prevailed during the Revolutionary period, but they opposed the more advanced forms of democracy. Their conservatism has been over-stressed.

¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 947-50, A. Maclaine to Geo. Hooper, March 24, 1783; J. H. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, II, 93; S. B. Weeks, "Thomas Person," *North Carolina Booklet*, IX, 26 ff.; G. J. McRee, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell*, I, 34, 116.

² McRee, I, 194-95; 395.

In many ways they were more liberal than were those who posed as the particular friends of the people. This is especially true of some of the younger men, Benjamin Hawkins being a conspicuous example.

Willie Jones, a wealthy and aristocratic planter of the Roanoke region, a Jeffersonian liberal, and brother to the conservative Allan Jones, was the acknowledged leader of the Radicals.³ Hardly less prominent in this party was General Thomas Person of Regulator fame. Person also was a wealthy planter of the Roanoke Valley. William R. Davie, son-in-law of Allan Jones, an energetic and efficient young man of English birth and a famous partisan leader on the Patriot side during the Revolution, was just coming into prominence as a liberal.⁴ Though he was not always in agreement with Jones and Person, he should be classified with them as a man of really progressive principles. The same may be said of Waightstill Avery. It was he whom the young Andrew Jackson was presently to apply to for legal instruction and later engage in a bloodless duel.⁵ Conspicuous, too, in the ranks of the Radicals were Timothy Bloodworth and Griffith Rutherford. Bloodworth was an American demagogue who lived ahead of his time. His home was in the Wilmington district where he organized the lower classes against the Conservatives.⁶ He was cordially hated by Hooper and his following, and he was frequently able to get the better of them at the polls. Rutherford was a more conventional figure for his time. Coming to North Carolina in the Scotch-Irish stream

³ *Ibid.*, I, 280; II, 232.

⁴ Wheeler, II, 197 ff.; McRee, II, 159-60; Hunter, p. 111.

⁵ Hunter, p. 44; McRee, I, 33; *C. R. N. C.*, VIII, 518-21.

⁶ McRee, II, 69, Maclaine to Iredell, Aug. 25, 1783; *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 943-46, Maclaine to Geo. Hooper, March 12, 1783.

from Pennsylvania, he settled in Rowan County near Salisbury. He was a militia officer during the Regulator troubles and led his company against the rioters. He commanded the western North Carolina battalions during the Revolution, and was now taking an active part in politics. Later he was to seek his fortune in the Cumberland wilderness. He was a rough, uneducated, forceful frontier character as were many of the western leaders of this period.⁷ Such men as he and Bloodworth based their democracy upon practical rather than theoretical principles. They were natural rather than self-appointed leaders of the people, and the masses were more ready to accept their guidance than that of men like Jones and Person. Yet, unfortunately, there was often more exploitation than enlightenment to be found in such counsel.

Richard Caswell and the men of his stamp, including William Blount, Alexander Martin, and Abner Nash, should be distinguished from either of the above-named groups. Martin was from the western, the others from the eastern part of the state. All were prominent during the Revolution and stood high in political circles. They were the typical politicians. They cared less for principles than for power and in many cases they were able to straddle issues and draw strength from both sides because of their reputation and influence. Their alignment was always dictated by their interests. Though they more often worked with the Radicals because the Radicals were more often in power, their natural sympathy was likely to be with the Conservatives. Consequently, they did not find it difficult both to hold with the hare and run with the hounds—whichever course at the time

⁷ Hunter, p. 176; *Biographical History of North Carolina*, (ed., Ashe), II, 381-85.

seemed most conducive to their personal interests. It was they, rather than the men of avowed principles, who held the highest offices and reaped the greatest rewards of the newly acquired freedom.

The first legislature which met after the restoration of peace lost no time in getting down to the problem of liquidating the war. The economic policy adopted had, superficially, a strange aspect, yet its inner workings may be discovered upon examination. The various bills of credit emitted during the war by the state and continental governments were, in effect, repudiated, and recoveries of debts, both past and future, were to be upon a specie-equivalent basis. The statute of limitations was suspended retroactively for the period of the war and recoveries of property might be made as though seven years had been dropped from the calendar.⁸ Yet, at the same time, a new issue of one hundred thousand dollars in paper currency was emitted⁹ and suits for debts and property were to be held in abeyance for one year.¹⁰ An act of pardon and oblivion was passed for the benefit of the late Tories. However, many exceptions were made and great precautions were taken against the recovery of estates by those from whom they had been confiscated during the war.¹¹

Obviously the politicians knew their business. The act staying collections for one year would please the short-sighted, while the provision for eventual collection on a specie basis would benefit those who controlled the government. The lawyers, who were chiefly from the eastern part of the state, were thrown out of work for a

⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 485-88.

⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 475-78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 490-91; XXI, 963.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, XIX, 349-51; XXIV, 489-90; McRee, I, 412.

year and they greatly resented it,¹² while the Radicals probably enjoyed their discomfiture.

The master-stroke of this session was the reopening of the land offices which had been closed in 1781. Not only were the old offices in the several counties reopened, but a new office was established at Hillsborough for the sale of western tracts. Congress had been agitating for the cession of these lands to the Federal government, but North Carolina decided to use them for retiring her war currency and discharging the debt to her continental line.

Most of the territory lying beyond the Appalachians was still in possession of the Indians, but they were assumed, in spite of the treaty of 1777, to have forfeited their claims by joining the British during the war. Reserving for the Cherokees a relatively small district lying south of the Holston, French Broad, and Big Pigeon rivers, and declaring her intention of holding a treaty later to discuss the matter—which was never done—North Carolina proceeded to appropriate to her own use all the remainder of the transmontane country. A military district lying in the Cumberland Valley, already provided under the act of 1782, was to be laid off¹³ and the lands for the continental line were to be located here. Davidson County was created to provide a local government for this area.¹⁴ Two hundred

¹² *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 962-63; McRee, II, 62 ff. Resolutions of constituents addressed to members of assembly from Chowan County and town of Edenton; *Ibid.*, II, 47, Iredell to Mrs. Iredell, May 23, 1783.

¹³ The commission appointed under the act of 1782 surveyed the boundaries of this district, but they were slightly changed by the survey made under the act of 1783. *American Historical Magazine*, II, 312-14; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 482-85; A. V. Goodpasture, "Education and the Public Lands in Tennessee," *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 213; Putnam, p. 210.

¹⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 540.

thousand acres in Carter's Valley were appropriated to Richard Henderson and his associates as compensation for their claims, which were now definitely repudiated.¹⁵ The remainder of the western country was thrown open to all comers at a price of ten pounds per hundred acres.¹⁶ Martin Armstrong was chosen surveyor for the military lands¹⁷ and John Armstrong was made entry-taker for the tracts outside the military reservation, his office being located at Hillsborough. The funds receivable for these lands were state and continental bills at eight hundred to one, and specie certificates—notes issued during the war for goods purchased—at their face value. These certificates could be bought at the time for something between two and three shillings to the pound,¹⁸ and eight shillings specie were then equivalent to one Spanish milled dollar.¹⁹ This means that the lands were to go at less than five dollars the hundred acres. No entries were to be made before October 20, 1783.

The legal process by which titles could be acquired under this act was as follows. The first step was to go into the woods and mark out, in a rough way, the boundaries of the tract desired. Such a rude survey was called an "entry." This entry was submitted to the entry-taker, who was appointed under the law. A record of the entry was made by this official, and a warrant for the survey was issued to the claimant. An official surveyor was connected with the entry-taker's office. When the survey had been made and the plat drawn, it had to be submitted to the secretary of state, who was authorized

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 530; XIX, 613-14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 482-83, 566-68.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 475-78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 478-82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XVII, 139-40.

to issue a grant requiring authentication by the governor. The title was finally clear when the grant was recorded in the office of the register for the county where the land was situate.²⁰

From the passage of the land act in 1783, the figure of William Blount begins to loom large in the early history of the Southwest. Born in 1749, he came from an old and distinguished family of the tidewater section in North Carolina. He was of Cavalier descent, being the great grandson of Sir William Blount, a royalist baronet who, in the cause of Charles I, suffered imprisonment by Cromwell. William and his father, Jacob Blount, had fought with Tryon against the Regulators in 1771.²¹ During the Revolution he had held important offices under the state government, and was a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1782 when the question of the cession of western lands was being discussed. It was his opinion at the time that the cession to Congress should be made provided certain conditions favorable to the state were attached.²²

The fact that the passage of the land act was to be the main business of the legislative session of 1783 was well known to the politicians before the assembly convened, and it was hardly a matter of chance that Blount returned from Philadelphia to take a seat in this body, or that, in it, he proposed a new issue of paper money so that speculators might secure cheap funds for the purchase of the domain so generously thrown open to them.²³ From that time until the end of his career, he rarely failed to place himself in the situation where his influence would best serve his private interests. He was a political

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 482-85.

²¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 434-41.

²² *Biographical History of North Carolina*, III, 25-27.

²³ *Ibid.*, XVI, 783; XIX, 605.

boss in the days before that institution had gained its full meed of recognition in this country. His favorite method was to keep somewhat in the background and work through others to achieve his ends. Yet he also had a genius for getting himself elevated to the seats of the mighty from which he could most advantageously pull wires to promote his personal business. He displayed a flair for being on the strategic spot at the right moment—a vital consideration in the days before steam and the telegraph had eliminated time and distance. The entire Southwest was his hunting ground and he stuffed his pockets with the profits of his speculations in land. In the maw of his incredible ambition—or greed—there originated land grabs involving thousands of choice acres. He attached to his service, either directly or indirectly, many of the men of his time and section who owed their fortunes and their positions largely to him. With his rise they, too, rose to power. He, like Caswell, Martin, and others of their ilk, practised nepotism on a grand scale, and feathered very cozily the nests of a host of kin and friends.

After North Carolina passed the act of 1782 which set aside the Cumberland basin as a military reservation and granted preëmption to those who had settled there before the passage of the original reservation act of 1780, the primitive governmental organization of the Cumberland settlements was revived. The committee of guardians was reorganized on January 7, 1783. It declared the allegiance of the region to the government of North Carolina, asked for the establishment of a county government, and prayed for certain further concessions in the matter of preëmption. James Robertson was chosen a delegate to attend the legislature of

the parent state and to work for the accomplishment of the ends desired.²⁴ Thus it happened that he was present at the memorable session of 1783 where Blount had momentous business to transact.

The shrewd Blount had the faculty of recognizing a good man when he saw him. Robertson was his man. An agreement was made between the two that the former was to buy up military claims and the latter was to locate the lands, receiving a fourth for his share in the business.²⁵ Robertson for the next few years spent much of his time in the forests of Middle and West Tennessee marking out tracts for Blount as well as for numerous other clients.²⁶

Immediately after the passage of the act of 1783, the woods were swarming with other men similarly engaged. A certain James White, with Robert Love and Francis A. Ramsey, explored the lands about the confluence of the French Broad and Holston rivers, marking out the site where Knoxville was established by White in 1791.²⁷ The fact that the future Governor Blount was to choose this town as the capital of the Southwest Territory before the streets had even been laid out, and that he and White remained close friends to the very last, strongly indicates that the great speculator was behind this expedition to the French Broad as he was behind that of James Robertson. Every such expedition had its backer among the powerful.

It was during the same rush that Griffith Rutherford

²⁴ "Records of Cumberland Association," *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 114-35; Putnam, pp. 186, 218; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 629-30.

²⁵ Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, III, pt. 1, 248-50; Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box R 2, Nos. 119, 122, 116, 165; Putnam, p. 238.

²⁶ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 185, 281-83.

²⁷ Ramsey, p. 277.

sent his son Henry²⁸ and his cousin Robert Weakley²⁹ to explore the lands of western Tennessee. One of the most powerful groups was that formed by Richard Caswell and James Glasgow, secretary of state for North Carolina. Stockley Donelson was surveyor of the county of Sullivan in the western country, while his father, the well-known Colonel John Donelson, was a candidate for surveyor of the newly formed trans-Allegheny county of Greene. Caswell now engaged in the formation of a company which was to secure the services of the Donelsons to mark out western lands under an agreement similar in all respects to that which Blount had made with Robertson.³⁰ Even Patrick Henry sent Joseph Martin down into the Holston Valley to select desirable tracts for him.³¹

These were the leaders in the speculative movement, but there were many lesser fry,³² and nearly four million choice acres were entered under the provisions of the act of 1783.³³ Much has been written of the Yazoo, the Muscle Shoals, and other spectacular land jobs. They were miserable failures. This adventure of 1783 was a huge success, yielding handsome fortunes to those who were in a position to profit by it. Yet no fame—or notoriety—has come to its perpetrators. It has hardly made a ripple upon the surface of the history of the Southwest.

²⁸ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 225-29; Tennessee Historical Society MSS. Box R 2, Nos. 162, 165.

²⁹ J. B. McFerrin, *History of Methodism in Tennessee*, I, 192-95.

³⁰ *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 958-60.

³¹ *Southern History Association Publications*, VI, 30, Martin to Henry, April 2, 1799; S. B. Weeks (ed.), "General Joseph Martin and the Cherokees," *Southern History Association Publications*, IX, 27-28.

³² Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box L 1, No. 63, Box R 2, No. 114; *The Christian Advocate*, Nashville, 1819, p. 244.

³³ John Armstrong Warrants, book in Tennessee Land Office, Nashville; *American State Papers, Lands*, I, 23-24, Jefferson's report.

In 1782 Caswell had backed Martin for the governorship. In 1783 Caswell ran against Martin, but the western constituency, from certain interested motives, supported the latter, and some of the eastern men accepted him as the lesser evil.³⁴ The result was that Caswell was defeated, but he was chosen speaker of the senate. The two men seem to have coöperated in the legislative program of the year. In 1784 Caswell finally regained the governorship and held it once more for the constitutional limit of three terms.

In the two sessions of 1784 the leading question was that of ceding the western lands to Congress. Blount had previously favored such a measure,³⁵ whereas Martin bitterly opposed it, saying that it was in the nature of "a vile agrarian law."³⁶ Blount, ever lynx-eyed where his personal interests were involved, apparently saw what the other speculators had not seen: that Congress might be given the burden of protecting and developing the lands while those who had derived claims from North Carolina could, at the same time, be protected in their rights by the terms of the grant.

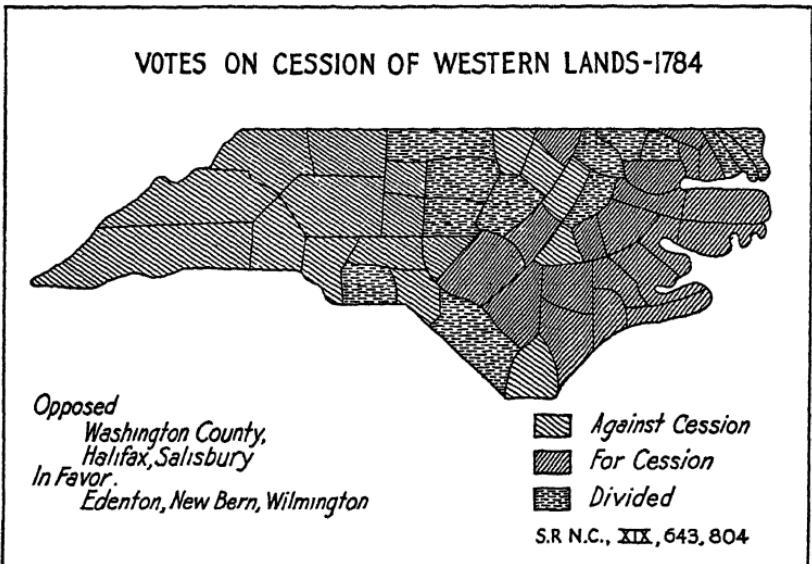
In the assembly of 1784, Blount was speaker of the house, and it is not surprising that he used his influence to personal advantage. The eastern men generally favored cession, for the frontiersmen were always upon the verge of war with the Indians and in case of trouble they would require protection. Indian wars were expensive and the cost would fall largely upon the east. That section, therefore, was quite willing to let Congress rather than the state bear such expense, and the majority of the Conservatives looked upon the alienation

³⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 956, 958-60.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, XVI, 434-41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, XVI, 732-34.

of the western lands as a good riddance.³⁷ Yet this proposition was opposed not only by the men who lived beyond the mountains, but also by most of those who lived above tidewater. It was from the older back country settlements that the great majority of the emigrants had gone beyond the mountains, so far as they had gone from North Carolina at all. Consequently



the backwoodsman felt a kinship with the frontiersman. He did not wish to leave his distant neighbor to struggle alone against the red men of the forest. Some day he might even wish to join him in the far-off country. The vote on the question of cession was a very clear-cut matter as between the east and the west,³⁸ and the east, with the help of the speculators, won.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, XVII, 185-86; McRee, II, 105-8. In 1790 Benjamin Hawkins wrote to Daniel Smith: "I have an abundant share of odium for my disposition evidenced to be favorable to [the western people] at Hillsborough in 1784, and I believe I was the only one perfectly disinterested in my endeavors. . . ." Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 57.

³⁸ *S.R.N.C.*, XIX, 643-44, 804-5.

The terms by which North Carolina in 1784 granted to Congress that land now constituting the state of Tennessee included a provision that all entries previously made under authority of the state should be valid, and that lands intended for compensation to the continental line of the state might be located outside the military reservation in case there were not a sufficient acreage within it. It was also stipulated that slavery should never be abolished without the consent of the inhabitants, and that the laws of North Carolina should be enforced pending creation of a new state within the ceded territory. Congress was given two years in which to accept or reject the grant.³⁹

As soon as news of this act was noised abroad, high-pitched indignation was aroused. The initial steps toward the formation of the State of Franklin, taken by the men of the older transmontane settlements, resulted directly from this act. The Radicals, led by Davie and Person, rose in their might, carried the elections, and brought about a repeal of the cession at the autumn meeting of the legislature in 1784.⁴⁰ This was the first time since the declaration of independence that the people had been appealed to on a specific issue; and it was the first time that the vote on an important question showed a distinct geographical division between the east and the west. It seems clear from this and other similar examples that the people are, as a rule, more directly influenced by geographical considera-

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 561-63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX, 711 ff. In his protest Davie said: "We could never consent that the public faith should be violated and the general interest sacrificed to the aggrandizement of a few Land Jobbers who have preyed on the depreciated credit of their Country and the necessities of the unfortunate citizen." See also *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 678-79.

tions than are their representatives when the latter are not specifically accountable to the former.

The speculators and the Conservatives had gone too far. The people were now against them and there was developing a group of popular leaders who knew how to make use of public sentiment even at this early day. The whole history of the State of Franklin grew out of this miscarriage of the plans of the land dealers. Yet it was not the revolt of the transmontane men which brought about a reversal of policy. The repeal of the cession act was carried through by the people living east of the mountains partly for the benefit of those living beyond them,⁴¹ but the west did not profit by this victory.

At the time the cession was made, John Armstrong's office for western lands was closed. No entries were to be valid if made after May 25, 1784.⁴² This meant the speculators had had but seven months since October 20, 1783, in which to stake out their claims. Remembering that a warrant could be secured only after the tract had been visited and located roughly by marking its boundaries, it will be realized that the average citizen had little chance to profit by this legislation even if he could get the certificates with which to make a purchase. This accounts for the fact that three million acres taken up in Armstrong's office fell almost altogether into the hands of jobbers who were, in the main, holders of political position.⁴³ Such was government of, for, and by the people in the days of the Fathers.

⁴¹ S. C. Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, p. 35.

⁴² *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 563-64.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, XVI, 919-20, Martin's letter to delegates in Congress, Dec. 8, 1783; John Armstrong Warrants, book in Tennessee Land Office, contains list of the warrants and the grantees. The Lewises, the Polks, and the Robertsons figure

The closure of Armstrong's office did not mean the end of the business. Lands already entered still had to be officially surveyed and the grants had to go through the several stages to perfect the titles. It was realized at the spring session of 1784 that no surveyors had been appointed to mark off the tracts entered in Armstrong's office. That defect was now remedied. The western country was divided into three districts corresponding with the present East, Middle, and West Tennessee.⁴⁴ The legislature then proceeded to elect a surveyor for each district. The successful candidates were William Terrell Lewis for the western, William Polk for the middle, and Stockley Donelson for the eastern district.⁴⁵ These are famous names in the early history of the Southwest, and their fame rests upon the land. Though five thousand acres was the legal limit which one man could enter under the act of 1783, each of these surveyors acquired enormous estates. Donelson, for instance, entered in his own name twenty thousand acres in the neighborhood of the present city of Chattanooga,⁴⁶ realizing thus early the commercial possibilities of that locality. The method by which the huge Polk estate was built up in Tennessee also becomes obvious.⁴⁷

It was not only in its land laws that the legislature of 1784 manifested its economic ideas. Its scheme of taxation was of the same peculiar character. The levies upon imports and stock in trade imposed in 1783 were largely. The fact that the significance of the business was clearly understood by intelligent observers at the time is shown by a protest which Howell Tatham introduced in the assembly on Dec. 22, 1787. *S. R. N. C.*, XX, 294-95. See also Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 565-66.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, XIX, 690-91, 679, 702.

⁴⁶ Land Papers, Tennessee Archives, Stockley Donelson certified, Nov. 23, 1795, to having surveyed this land for himself.

⁴⁷ *Impartial Review and Cumberland Repository*, Nashville, Nov. 22, 1806.

abolished and the principle of the land tax was completely transformed. Theretofore the assessment had been imposed according to value, but thereafter it was to be imposed according to quantity alone, and a poll tax equal to the tax upon three hundred acres of land was linked with it.⁴⁸ These measures notoriously favored the merchants and wealthier landowners and worked a real hardship upon the poorer men. Waightstill Avery, Thomas Person, and eight others protested against the act on this ground.⁴⁹ It is notable that the central counties of the state—the old Regulator district—gave the heaviest vote against the tax bill.⁵⁰

Strange as it may seem, the assembly which passed this legislation attacked an age-old institution of aristocracy. It abolished entails and primogeniture.⁵¹ It was in accord with the spirit of the times that this should have been done, but it would not so easily appear to have been in accord with the temper of the body which did it. However, the contradiction is hardly so great as it might seem. Speculators require a fluid medium in which to work, not a stable one. They are engaged in the building up of fortunes, not in the preservation of those already accumulated. Primogeniture and entail can easily be dispensed with by such men.

While these questions were being agitated, the Conservatives were still working for some measure of relief for those whose property had been confiscated. A resolution was introduced by them in the legislature recommending the repeal of all laws inconsistent with that clause in the treaty of peace urging that no impediment be placed in the way of collection of debts due by

⁴⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 553, 556-57, 658 ff.

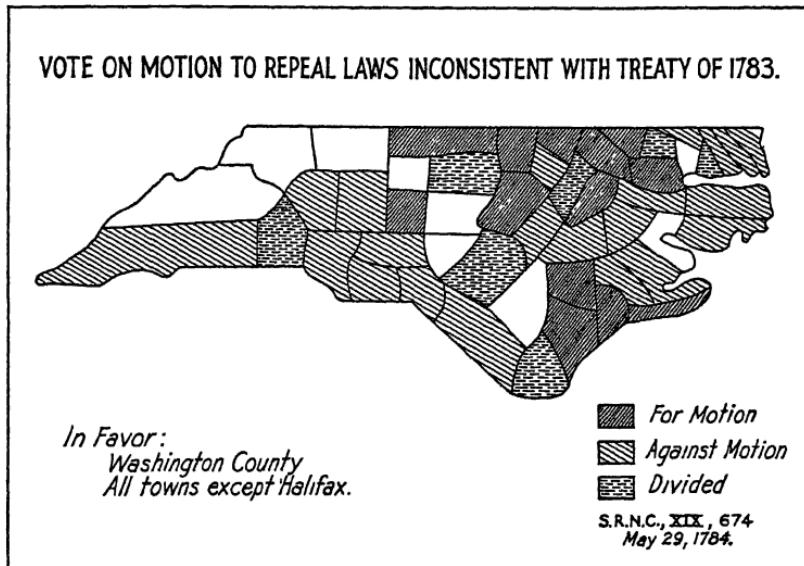
⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XIX, 688.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX, 811-12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 572-77.

Americans to loyal British subjects. North Carolina had confiscated such debts along with Tory property.

Championed by Hooper in the house and by Johnston in the senate, this resolution was defeated,⁵² and the geographical distribution of the vote illuminates partisan alignments as they stood at the time. One would infer from the usual statements upon the subject, and even



from those made by Iredell himself, that the Conservatives representing the east voted for the measure and that the Radicals representing the west voted against it. Yet Willie Jones, leader of the Radicals, supported the resolution in the senate, and William Blount, usually rated a Conservative, not only opposed the proposition but even went so far as to attempt securing the passage of an act banishing the former Tories from the state.⁵³ As a matter of fact, the frontier counties voted strongly

⁵² *Ibid.*, XIX, 674-75, 832-35; XXIV, 661-64; McRee, II, 99-100.

⁵³ *S. R. N. C.*, XVI, 932-36; XVII, 144-47, 185-86.

against Hooper's resolution. But so also did the counties in the Albemarle Sound region. Both the Wilmington and Roanoke regions gave considerable support to the proposal.⁵⁴

The indications here are that such men as Griffith Rutherford and Alexander Martin were able to carry the west with them for punitive measures, but that such men as Blount and Caswell were able to carry a large part of the coastal region in the same direction. Johnston and Iredell were not able to make headway against such powerful influence in their own neighborhood; but Hooper, Maclaine, and Harnett seem to have been able to carry their Wilmington constituents with them. It was Willie Jones and his supporters of the Roanoke Radical group who appear to have been able most tellingly to influence the alignment of their section of the state. The distribution of the vote on this measure is strikingly like that occurring later on the question of the adoption of the Federal constitution, on which issue the Jones party was lined up solidly in opposition. The power of this faction is manifest in each instance, and its strength lay in that broad belt running through the state from Wilmington northward to the Roanoke Valley in which the Regulator movement had had its stronghold.

Certainly it does appear that the use of partisan designation is sadly misleading in this case. To support the cause of the Loyalists was to label one's self a Conservative; yet it was the liberal Radicals who seem to have given them the most substantial support they received. In fact, both "parties" were split on the very issue which was supposed to be a test of partisan loyalty.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, XIX, 674.

The Conservatives were far more interested in the matter of confiscation than in the question of public lands. They often condemned the "mean arts used to promote private interest, and the low cunning practiced to ensure the good will of violent men,"⁵⁵ but they made no organized effort to check speculation. Even such civic-minded men as Person and Iredell were not above seizing the opportunity to purchase acreage when the chance for profit looked inviting.⁵⁶ Yet it should be noted that neither the liberals of the Person group nor the conservatives of the Johnston group took any active part in the exploitation of the one great resource which the state possessed. It was the Caswell-Blount-Martin group which took the initiative in every phase of this movement. They and their followers led the way and reaped the reward.

⁵⁵ McRee, II, 45-46, 70, 93-94.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 455; *American Historical Magazine*, I, 77-79, Thomas Person to James Robertson, May 23, 1787.

CHAPTER V

THE STATE OF FRANKLIN

IN THE autumn of 1782 several Chickasaw Indians slipped out from the headquarters of their nation at the bluff where Memphis now stands. They sped through the forest on moccasined feet, seeking Colonel John Donelson with whom they had doubtless had dealings two years previously when he had assisted in establishing the Cumberland settlements. Donelson was at this time prospecting for lands in Kentucky. Here the tawny couriers found him and delivered their message. The Chickasaws hated the Spanish. Realizing they could no longer look to the English for protection on account of the Revolution, they now wished to make peace with the "Virginians," but did not know where to find their "head men." Donelson communicated their desire to Governor Benjamin Harrison of Virginia, suggesting that a treaty be held at the French Lick on the Cumberland.¹ Harrison accordingly appointed Isaac Shelby, who had just removed from the Holston to Kentucky, Joseph Martin, who still kept his trading house at the Long Island of the Holston, and Donelson himself to negotiate the treaty at the place suggested.²

While these plans were under way, Joseph Martin attended the 1783 session of the North Carolina legislature. William Blount was at this time in the assembly busying himself with the passage of important land

¹ *C. V. S. P.*, III, 284, 513-14. During this period the Southern Indians commonly spoke of the Americans as "Virginians."

² *Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS.*, I, 56. Commission dated January 11, 1783.

legislation. At this juncture the commissioners appointed under the act of 1782 to survey the western district reserved for military grants made their report. From them Blount and Martin now discovered that the Great Bend of the Tennessee River lay south of the lands claimed by North Carolina and in territory claimed by Georgia and South Carolina.³ A company was hastily formed by Blount and Caswell who made arrangements with Martin and Donelson to purchase and occupy the valuable district lying between the bend of the Tennessee and the North Carolina line. Blount and Caswell furnished the capital while Martin and Donelson did the surveying and looked after interests in the West.⁴ Griffith Rutherford, Anthony Bledsoe, John Sevier, and other prominent westerners were shortly admitted to the company in order to strengthen its prestige.

Having made these arrangements, Martin returned to the Long Island where he met Colonel Donelson. Major John Reid had already been dispatched by them to Virginia to secure instructions from the governor regarding the Chickasaw treaty.⁵ Returning with these instructions, Reid was next sent to the Chickasaw Bluffs to arrange with the Indians for a parley at the French Lick.⁶ On the way out he stopped at the Lick to get consent of the settlers to the holding of the treaty in their midst. Some of the Nashville pioneers objected on account of the newness of the settlement and the scarcity of provisions,⁷ but all difficulties were finally

³ S. B. Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the Cherokees," *Southern History Association Publications*, IX, 27-41.

⁴ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 17.

⁵ C. V. S. P., III, 426-27, 427-28, 468-69; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 60.

⁶ C. V. S. P., III, 541; MS. Calendar of Kings Mountain Papers (Draper Papers), Isaac Shelby to James Robertson, May 3, 1783. ⁷ C. V. S. P., III, 459.

overcome and the negotiations were carried on in the fall of 1783, with Martin and Donelson acting as commissioners under instructions from the governor of Virginia.⁸ Here the friendly Chickasaws made a peace which they never violated, and ceded to the whites the lands in the bend of the Cumberland which Henderson had purchased from the Cherokees in 1775.⁹ While engaged in the official business of the treaty, the two negotiators found time for an important private transaction. They purchased from the Cherokees the Great Bend of the Tennessee according to their arrangement with Blount and Caswell, for which act they were rebuked by Governor Harrison.¹⁰ It seems that Shelby refused to take part in the treaty because he scorned to coöperate with men who used public office for private gain.¹¹

This was the beginning of the Muscle Shoals speculation. In February, 1784, Blount paid a visit to the Georgia assembly and succeeded in putting through that body a measure establishing a new county in the Bend. It was to be governed by a commission of seven men: four Georgians, together with Martin, Donelson, and Sevier. This commission was to have the right to grant lands in tracts of a thousand acres. Donelson was made surveyor for the county, Sevier was commissioned colonel commandant, and Martin was appointed Indian agent. Since South Carolina also had a claim to the area, Wade Hampton and certain other leaders from that state were admitted to the company for obvious reasons.¹²

⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 527, 533; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 55.

⁹ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 65.

¹⁰ *C. V. S. P.*, III, 547, 548, 560-61, 567, 601-2; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 64.

¹¹ *C. V. S. P.*, III, 533.

¹² S. B. Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the

It was at the spring session of the North Carolina legislature in 1784 that the western lands of that state were ceded to Congress on motion of William Blount. His friends were so afraid that body would decline the empty gift, they made no attempt to attach a provision crediting the state with the expense of her western military expeditions, as had been done in the case of the Virginia cession.¹³ So far everything had gone well. Under the terms of this grant, Blount and other speculators would have been secured in the claims they had acquired through John Armstrong's office according to the legislation of 1783. But when the Radicals brought about a repeal of the cession at the meeting of the assembly in the fall of the same year, the plans of the land jobbers began to go awry.

The first catastrophe following in the wake of the repeal was the revolt of the State of Franklin. It will be recalled that the speculators were assisted in the passage of the cession act by the eastern Conservatives who despised the westerners and were glad to be rid of the troublesome breeders of expensive Indian wars. Such men had not hesitated to express their opinion freely during the course of the debate on the cession measure, while the liberal element had opposed their selfish policy. The westerners were deeply offended.¹⁴ Half of the representatives from the transmontane counties had voted for the relinquishment.¹⁵ Their constituents could probably have been pacified except for the aspersions cast upon them in connection with

West," *loc. cit.*, pp. 439-42; John Redd, "General Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, pp. 262-63, 264-65, 265-67; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 71, 72; *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 138-39; Haywood, p. 172.

¹³ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 81; Williams, p. 25.

¹⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 637-40.

¹⁵ Williams, p. 23.

the act.¹⁶ As matters stood, it was easy to arouse their anger against the entire proceeding. There was one Arthur Campbell who had been biding his time, awaiting just such an opportunity as this agitation now afforded.

Campbell lived in southwestern Virginia in close contact with the Holston settlements. His was an important family in that region. Colonel William Christian and his son Gilbert were closely associated with him, as were also William Cocke and a number of the prominent Virginian settlers in the Holston Valley.¹⁷

As early as 1782 Campbell had formulated a plan to bring about the separation of the transmontane area of Virginia and North Carolina from the parent states. He gave publicity to the grievances of the western settlers and called meetings to agitate the question of redress. His object was to create a new state of the Confederacy and secure for the local legislature the control of the public lands. His proposal was that lands should be disposed of by the assembly, but that funds arising therefrom should be turned over to the Congress of the Confederation.¹⁸

Naturally the government of Virginia opposed his ambitious plan, and he made no substantial progress with it until North Carolina ceded her western domain to Congress. This occurred at just the time Congress was formulating plans for the creation of new states in the West. Under the arrangements adopted in April, 1784, it was provided that either Congress or the settlers

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁷ F. J. Turner, "Western State-making in the Revolutionary Era," *American Historical Review*, I, 256; Williams, p. 54; *Calendar of Preston Papers*, p. 144; Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., IX, 43.

¹⁸ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., IX, 32; Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 259; *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 3-5, 109-10.

themselves might take the initiative in organizing the new governments.¹⁹ It was perfectly clear, however, that Congress expected to control the public lands.²⁰

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the western Carolinians attempted to set up their own government as soon as the cession was made. It is true the state had reserved to herself the jurisdiction pending acceptance of the cession by Congress, but if any demurred on this account, it was easy to point out to them that the parent state had renounced all responsibility for their defense, and that it was largely through desire to be relieved of this expense that the western settlements had been cast off. While it is true that half the transmontane delegates in the assembly had voted for the cession, it is glaringly clear that they did so in the interest of the land speculators. The majority of the westerners, both in the piedmont and the transmontane areas, were opposed to the cession as a sacrifice of the frontiersmen to the self-interest of the east.²¹ But now that the act was done, it was not difficult to persuade the disinherited to make the most of the situation—particularly with such a suave spokesman as Arthur Campbell.

Campbell, both personally and through William Cocke, urged on the movement for the creation of a new state.²² An assembly was called to meet at Jonesborough in August, 1784. It was elected in the same manner as that which had been employed by Campbell in his Virginia enterprise. This body voted unanimously for the creation of a new state²³ and issued a call for a

¹⁹ *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 461-63, 484-85; Williams, p. 28.

²⁰ *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 451-58; Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

²¹ Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 186 ff.

²² *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 44-45, 45-46; Williams, pp. 31, 44.

²³ Ashe, II, 34-37; Williams, pp. 28-29.

convention in the following December to draw up a frame of government.²⁴

Both John Sevier and Joseph Martin coöperated in the movement.²⁵

Before the convention met, North Carolina had repealed the cession act and resumed jurisdiction over her western lands. This changed the face of the whole situation. The Franklinites were now rebels although they had rebelled unwittingly. There was nothing revolutionary in the minds of the men who had started out to establish this State of Franklin. They were sincere in their belief that they had been left without a government and felt themselves authorized to create one. Whether fully justified in this assumption or not, when the state of Tennessee entered the Union in 1796, she did so under a constitution which the people had drawn up with no more authorization than the Franklinites had had for establishing their government.²⁶

The repeal of the cession act placed the Franklinites in a quandary. They would now either have to retrace their steps or assume an attitude of opposition to, if not rebellion against, North Carolina. Once a movement is well under way, it is not often abandoned before it has been tested. It is but natural that the people of Franklin persisted in their course of separation. The convention met in December as planned and renewed by a decisive vote the declaration of independence. As was to be expected in the face of developments, there was an opposition vote this time. Among the more rabid opponents was John Tipton.²⁷

²⁴ September 16 was the date originally set. Williams, p. 32.

²⁵ Weeks, "Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the West," *loc. cit.*, p. 451. It is here stated that Martin opposed the new movement at this time.

²⁶ *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 446-49, 545-46.

²⁷ Williams, p. 40.

Joseph Martin also opposed the movement from this time forward.²⁸ He had attended the session of the North Carolina legislature which had repealed the cession act, and it is probable that Patrick Henry brought his influence to bear upon him at that time. Martin had been Henry's western agent long before, and continued in that capacity for many years afterward. It is reasonably safe to take his attitude as a reflection of that of his patron, and Henry was consistently opposed to the Franklin movement despite Sevier's assurance, in a letter forwarded through Campbell's political enemy, William Russell, that none of the Virginians would be incorporated in the new project without the consent of their government.²⁹

This stand of the eloquent Virginian seems strange in view of his customary sympathetic attitude toward the West. It is especially so in view of the fact that he strongly denounced North Carolina's final cession of her western lands in 1790, the terms of which were almost identical with those of the cession of 1784. The only possible explanation would seem to be that Henry, who was elected governor of Virginia in 1784, feared the Franklin movement would encourage the western Virginians also to secede, as Campbell so ardently desired, and he felt it to be his executive duty to suppress any such ambition.

Cut loose from the parental apron-strings, the fledgling State of Franklin now had a clean slate on which to write redress of all its grievances. The convention which assembled in December, 1784, rose to this unprecedented

²⁸ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 53-54; Williams, pp. 41-42.

²⁹ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 42-43; Williams, p. 50; William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia, 1841), pp. 456-59.

opportunity by adopting almost *in toto* the very instrument of government under which they had been so restive—the constitution of North Carolina, subject to ratification by a later convention.³⁰ The explanation is—the land jobbers. William Cocke was sent to Congress with a petition for admission to the Confederation. The convention did not define the boundaries claimed by the new state, but Cocke carried with him a paper drawn up by Campbell in which it was urged that the government should include not only the western North Carolina settlements, but the Great Bend of the Tennessee and most of western Virginia.³¹ Well might Patrick Henry fear Campbell's designs on Virginia territory.

The first assembly held under the new government declared that land claims derived from the parent state should be as good as though the infant state had never been formed, although the constitution said nothing on the subject.³²

Shortly after the adjournment of the December convention, Sevier received belated notice that the North Carolina legislature, at the same time it repealed the cession act, had created a new judicial and military district to be made up of the transmontane counties. David Campbell, brother to Arthur, was to be superior court judge of the new jurisdiction, and Sevier was commissioned brigadier general.³³ Thus an attempt was made to silence some of the complaints of the western

³⁰ Published in *American Historical Magazine*, IX, 399-408, and in *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 662 ff. See also Haywood, pp. 153-55.

³¹ A. P. Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIII, 372; J. Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, pp. 29-30; Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 115-16; *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 464-66.

³² *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 642-47; Williams, p. 56.

³³ Draper Papers, *Kings Mountain MSS.*, XI, 76a; *Ibid.*, *Tennessee MSS.*, IV,

people and to conciliate with the sop of office certain of their leaders.

Sevier was so far placated by his commission as to oppose the first elections held under the Franklin constitution and prevent the election of delegates to the legislature in two counties.³⁴ But seeing that he could not stand against his neighbors and retain his popularity, his opposition was of brief duration. The result was that he remained the unwilling governor of a rebel state. As late as May, 1785, he was writing to Evan Shelby in favor of reconciliation with North Carolina.³⁵

When North Carolina, by the act of 1783, had seized practically all the western country from the Indians without their consent, she proposed to hold a treaty with them at a subsequent date and make some belated payment for the lands. Arrangements were actually made for holding this treaty at the Long Island,³⁶ but when the cession act was passed in 1784, this proceeding was halted. Governor Martin wrote to the Federal authorities at Philadelphia that goods had been purchased for the purposes of this treaty, but they would now be turned over to Congress so that that body might proceed with the negotiations.³⁷ He appointed Joseph Martin and William Blount to coöperate with the Federal authorities in this matter.³⁸ When the cession act was repealed, North Carolina resumed responsibility for the negotiations,³⁹ but the revolt of Franklin caused Governor Martin to refuse to proceed with the affair.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 162; *S. R. N. C.*, XIX, 487, 940-41; XXIV, 689-90; Williams, pp. 41-42.

³⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 728-29; *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 121; Ashe, II, 38-40.

³⁶ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 416; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 647-48; Williams, p. 54.

³⁷ *S. R. N. C.*, XIX, 497-99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, XVII, 76-77.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XVII, 270.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XVII, 111-12.

The result was that the treaty was never held.⁴⁰ Such treatment naturally begat hostility among the Indians, and the Franklinites complained bitterly that the parent state had taken lands from the natives and then refused to pay for them, thereby calling down the wrath of the savages upon the heads of the frontier settlers who had nothing to do with the transaction.

During 1785 Congress proceeded to negotiate on its own account. Lachlan McIntosh of Georgia, Israel Pickens of South Carolina, and Benjamin Hawkins of North Carolina, were appointed to meet the Cherokees at Hopewell in South Carolina; and Martin and Blount, under the North Carolina appointment, met with them. A treaty was negotiated whereby the Indians ceded to the whites the Cumberland basin which had been purchased by Henderson in 1775, and the Holston territory which had been purchased by North Carolina in 1777. All other western lands within North Carolina were to be reserved to the natives who were authorized to punish and expel any and all intruders.⁴¹ Thus many settlers who had taken up acreage under the act of 1783 were left in the Indian country. A part even of the military district established according to that act was relinquished.⁴² Congress ratified the treaty of Hopewell.⁴³ The North Carolina senate passed a resolution expressing "utmost horror" at this arrangement, but the house refused to concur.⁴⁴ Joseph Martin had agreed to the instrument, but Blount issued a forceful protest against

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX, 940-41; XXII, 640-42; *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 25.

⁴¹ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 36-46; *Steele Papers*, I, 38-44; *Weeks, "Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the West," loc. cit.*, pp. 445 ff.

⁴² *Ramsey*, pp. 336-37, 449; *Haywood*, 225-26.

⁴³ *Williams*, p. 126; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 48-50.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-98.

it as a betrayal of the interests of his state.⁴⁵ He was suspected of having taken the opportunity to secure from the Cherokees a confirmation of their cession of the Bend lands, but denied the charge.⁴⁶ Martin's attitude is hard to understand in view of Patrick Henry's pronounced opposition to the treaty.⁴⁷ The stand taken by the North Carolina house of commons in refusing to condemn the Hopewell treaty indicates that the Radicals, who had opposed the cession and brought about its repeal, were also willing to thwart the establishment of a new state by any means available.⁴⁸ This attitude they maintained to the end. It looked as though the schemes of the land speculators had been wrecked beyond repair.⁴⁹

In the meantime the Muscle Shoals project had suffered a reverse. In December, 1784, before the Franklin constitution had been adopted, Blount wrote to Sevier, Martin, and Donelson that he had been appointed a commissioner of North Carolina to negotiate the treaty with the Cherokees at the Long Island in April or May following. He stated he had heard that plans had been made for opening an office to dispose of the Muscle Shoals property in March at the same place, and asked if the consummation of such plans could not be postponed until he and Caswell could be present.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation," *loc. cit.*, p. 373; *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 578-80.

⁴⁶ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 18a; *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 767.

⁴⁷ A. P. Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier*, p. 93; Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the Cherokees," *Southern History Association Publications*, IX, 36.

⁴⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 880-81; XX, 379-80. Vote on bill to repeal cession act, lost 23 to 22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XXII, 659-61.

⁵⁰ Redd, "Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, pp. 267-68; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 18.

But the adoption of the Franklin constitution in the same month put an end to both the treaty and the land sale, and the great speculation went on the rocks for the time being.⁵¹ Blount spent much of his time in Congress for the next few years and was able to give little personal attention to his western interests, while Caswell succeeded Alexander Martin as governor in 1785.

In November, 1785, the second Franklin convention met, which body was to accept or reject the constitution drawn up the previous year. A committee was appointed which brought in a report consisting of the draft of an entirely new frame of government.⁵² According to Williams, this instrument had been prepared in advance through the coöperation of Arthur Campbell and the Reverend William Graham, president of Liberty Hall College, Lexington, Virginia, a Presbyterian institution and the predecessor of Washington and Lee University. The main champion of this plan on the floor of the convention was the Reverend Samuel Houston, who received his degree from Liberty Hall the same year. His leading opponent was the Reverend Hezekiah Balch, also a former student of the Lexington college.⁵³ Heated debate resulted over this constitutional question, and controversial pamphlets were published by the advocates of each side—the first time that this method of propaganda was used west of the mountains.⁵⁴ On the surface it appeared to be a battle between the clergymen—a rather queer procedure when one considers the special legislation of North Carolina to confine them exclusively to the province of the church. Although

⁵¹ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 75. Cf. Whitaker, "Muscle Shoals Speculation," *loc. cit.*, p. 371.

⁵² Ramsey, pp. 325 ff.

⁵³ Williams, pp. 90-94.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

the ecclesiastical mark was etched deeply into the newly proposed constitution, one may be sure that the divines were not the principals in the game. It was John Sevier who proposed that, instead of the new plan, the constitution of North Carolina be adopted.⁵⁵ His championship of this cause betrays the real significance of the issue.

The new plan is usually referred to as the fanatical proposition of a few clergymen, and it is assumed that it was defeated because of that fact. True, it provided that office-holders must possess a good character and believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the Trinity, and the Protestant religion; but there was to be no establishment of any church, and freedom of worship was carefully insured. The North Carolina constitution required the same religious qualifications, lacking only the stipulation in regard to character. While the instrument did possess a distinctly ecclesiastical cast, requiring, for instance, that the document should be drawn out into a familiar catechetical form and taught in the schools, there was really no greater element of intolerance in it than there was in the North Carolina constitution. Though the opposition played up this phase of the question to such an extent that they convinced all historians who have noticed the subject, the plan was defeated on quite another score.⁵⁶

This was the first original constitution drawn up west of the mountains, and, without being fanatical, it was in many respects one of the most democratic ever produced in the United States. Though it retained the

⁵⁵ *American Historical Magazine*, I, 63.

⁵⁶ Its defenders said: "It might be seen that the greater part and substance of the report of the committee contains principles, provisions, and restrictions which secure the poor and the ruled from being trampled on by the rich and the rulers; . . ." Haywood, pp. 170 ff.

property qualification for members of the single-chambered legislature, manhood suffrage was provided, registration of voters and elections by ballot were required, and all legislation of a general nature was to be referred to the people before being finally enacted. Though the legislature retained the right to elect the superior judges, the secretary of state, and the treasurer, the choice of the governor and executive council as well as of all county officials was placed in the hands of the people. As of old, the justices of the peace were elected for life, but they were required to be "scholars to do the business," and were to receive no remuneration. Careful provision was made for the removal of corrupt or immoral incumbents. A university was to be established before 1787, and certain taxes were provided for its support. Full accounts of income and expenditure were to be published annually by the assembly. Provision was made for the establishment of houses of correction for criminals found guilty of offenses not punishable by death.⁵⁷

If one is familiar with the way in which a small group of men were, at that period, able to control the government of North Carolina, he can hardly escape the conviction that this was a sincere attempt to put the reins of power, for the first time, into the hands of the people, and to provide an enlightened administration.

While maintaining this, there is no intention of maintaining that all who supported this liberal constitution were disinterested in their motives. Arthur Campbell was no reformer. He was, in fact, capable of much indirection.⁵⁸ While he did not live in Franklin, Cocke and the Virginian settlers on the Holston were greatly

⁵⁷ *American Historical Magazine*, I, 48-63.

⁵⁸ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 37.

under his influence, and most of the support for the new plan came through this connection. The ecclesiastic influence and the democratic appeal might tell in favor of the weaker side. Their object was apparently this: if Sevier should succeed in having the constitution of North Carolina adopted as that of the new state, he and his backers, Blount and Caswell, would remain in control of the western land situation. If this influence could be overthrown by adopting a really democratic form of government, anyone who had money or influence might acquire property in the new country. It is important to note in this connection that the Franklin government, the great assertion of frontier independence and democracy, had not yet challenged the claim to a single acre of land acquired under the exploiting legislation of North Carolina. Nor did Sevier, the idol of the people, have any intention of doing so. Not even John Armstrong's office, with its palpable corruption, aroused the ire of the West; and all the claims legally deriving through that office were eventually made good without so much as a protest.

Sevier won. The constitution of North Carolina was adopted by a decisive vote as the instrument of government for the State of Franklin.⁵⁹ Democracy was defeated in the wilderness. One of the complaints of the Franklinites had been against the undemocratic method, recently adopted by North Carolina, of taxing all land equally, regardless of value. Yet, when the new government levied taxes in 1787, it was in accordance with this same principle.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Williams, p. 92.

⁶⁰ Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 186 ff; Ramsey, p. 289; Williams, pp. 132-33.

Thus these amazing rebels at once proceeded to shackle themselves again with the very fetters which they had but just loosed by their rebellion. The explanation is—again, the land jobbers. The new government did not, then, prove to be the fountainhead and bulwark of a beneficent new democracy. Greed, working through the land speculators, defeated the hopes of the people.

During 1785 the Franklin legislature made provision for military occupation of the Great Bend in coöperation with Georgia.⁶¹ By February, 1786, Wade Hampton had secured a grant from the legislature of South Carolina. He and Sevier then proceeded to collaborate in making plans for a settlement.⁶² In the latter part of the same year, war having broken out between Georgia and the Creeks, the assembly of that state took up again the question of the Muscle Shoals project, proposing to grant lands in the Bend to the Franklinites in return for military assistance against the savages.⁶³ The Franklin assembly responded by passing favorable legislation.⁶⁴ Major George Elholm served as the agent between Georgia and Franklin and also assisted the new state to concert its military measures.⁶⁵ In the meantime, Joseph Martin,⁶⁶ Caswell, and Blount maintained their interest in the venture.⁶⁷

It can easily be seen that there could have existed, under the circumstances, no real hostility between Caswell and Sevier, although legally Sevier was governor

⁶¹ Williams, p. 87; Haywood, p. 182.

⁶² Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 79.

⁶³ "Joseph Martin and the Cherokees," *loc. cit.*, pp. 33-36; Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., IX, 45.

⁶⁴ Ramsey, p. 377; Williams, pp. 102-3, 110.

⁶⁵ Williams, pp. 106-9.

⁶⁶ "Joseph Martin and the Cherokees," *loc. cit.*, pp. 33-36.

⁶⁷ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 18a.

of a state in rebellion against the state of which Caswell was governor. When Caswell succeeded Alexander Martin as chief executive of North Carolina, he at once assumed a more friendly tone toward the Franklin governor than had his predecessor.⁶⁸ All might yet have been well had Caswell been able to control his legislature. While privately he was writing warm personal letters and at the same time officially communicating dignified remonstrances to the rebel governor, his assembly proceeded to pass laws for bringing the recalcitrants into line. This was the policy of Person and the Radicals.⁶⁹ While Griffith Rutherford failed to secure the passage of a conciliatory measure,⁷⁰ it was provided that informal elections should be held in the seceded counties to choose delegates to the North Carolina legislature despite the hostility of the Franklinites.⁷¹ In support of this measure, it was also provided that the taxes due since 1784 should be forgiven all who would make their submission.⁷² John Tipton took the lead in organizing the North Carolina party, and by the end of the year there was an ominous prospect of civil strife in the West.⁷³

The situation became even more critical in 1787, when North Carolina provided for the appointment of loyal officials in the Franklin district.⁷⁴ The result was that soon there were two sheriffs to a county, each trying to collect taxes and enforce the laws of rival governments. Such a condition could not fail to lead to armed conflict. In the northern counties of Sullivan and Hawkins, bordering on the Virginia line, the

⁶⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 471-72.

⁶⁹ Williams, pp. 64, 116, 143-44, 183, 190-91.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 765-66; Haywood, p. 175.

⁷² *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 85-86; XXIV, 820; Williams, pp. 116, 126-27.

⁷³ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 779; Williams, p. 103.

⁷⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 672-73.

Franklinites gradually lost their hold during the year. In Washington County, where both Sevier and Tipton lived, they maintained their hostility upon substantially even terms, while in Greene and a group of new southern counties created under authority of the State of Franklin, the Sevier faction had the better of the argument. Here no candidates were found to accept the North Carolina commissions.⁷⁵

The reason for this unusual strength of the bantling state in the southern portion of her area was that the lands here, according to the treaty of Hopewell, were left in the Indian country, and North Carolina appeared to have acquiesced in this treaty notwithstanding the fact that she had, by her act of 1783, declared the native title extinct on all lands north of the French Broad River. Settlers had gone even south of this boundary, and, with the approval of Governor Martin,⁷⁶ Sevier consequently negotiated two treaties by which the Cherokees ceded to the State of Franklin all lands lying between the French Broad and the Little Tennessee.⁷⁷ In 1787 the new state opened a land office for this district and tracts were to be sold at forty shillings the hundred acres.⁷⁸ Naturally the people living upon lands which North Carolina denied their right to own would support the state defending their possession.⁷⁹ The new counties established in this area were christened Caswell, Blount, and Sevier—names which speak for themselves.

The legitimate governor was not unaware of the dangers in the situation, nor was he so lacking in

⁷⁵ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 256; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 131, 156, 678-79.

⁷⁶ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 37; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 727-28.

⁷⁷ Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 160; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 649; Steele Papers, I, 52-54; Williams, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁸ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 256; Williams, pp. 132-33.

⁷⁹ Ramsey, p. 356.

resourcefulness as to fail to take measures for remedying it. Not until the passage of the act of 1787 did Caswell appoint a man to succeed Sevier in the brigadier generalship which he had accepted in 1784 in spite of his acceptance also of the governorship of Franklin. Under legislative compulsion, he now grudgingly designated Evan Shelby for the post.⁸⁰

Sevier had first migrated to the Holston at the instance of this stern old Welshman and hard-headed realist.⁸¹ They had ever since been closely associated in all that concerned their section of the frontier. There was every reason to believe their coöperation now might bring about a cessation of strife, and Caswell intended that it should. It was presumably under his direction that a conference was held between the two western leaders and a *modus vivendi* adopted pending an adjustment of differences.⁸² Caswell had maintained from the first that he favored a separation of the western country provided the Franklinites would submit and make some agreement with North Carolina.⁸³ His stand in this matter is perfectly intelligible. All that he and Blount desired was an agreement that no land claims should be called into question. Sevier was not only ready, he was eager at any time to make such terms.⁸⁴

In this condition of affairs, the Franklinites, under advice from Caswell to Sevier, decided that they themselves would seek election to the North Carolina legislature in order to present their case and carry through an agreement on advantageous terms. Even Evan Shelby

⁸⁰ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 671.

⁸¹ Williams, p. 282.

⁸² *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 674-75.

⁸³ Williams, pp. 143-44.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-74, 171. Governor Martin had also been willing to come to terms on the same basis.—*C. V. S. P.*, IV, 32; C. H. Alden, "The State of Franklin," *American Historical Review*, VIII, 285.

offered as a candidate and was elected.⁸⁵ These delegates were advised by Caswell to bring as many petitions as possible showing desire for separation. He had repeatedly urged that there would be a better chance of settlement if the transmontane men could show that they were united.⁸⁶

It was Tipton, the anti-Franklinite, and Cocke, the Franklinite, who defeated this plan of reconciliation which Caswell and Sevier were urgently trying to carry through. Tipton men ran against the Sevier candidates for the North Carolina legislature and were able to prevent the former from displaying a united front in favor of separation.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Cocke and his supporters, who were anxious to use the new state for their own purposes, prevented acceptance by the Franklinites of the compromise entered into by Sevier and Shelby.⁸⁸ Shelby was so incensed by this turn of affairs that he advised Caswell to send troops to suppress the new state.⁸⁹ The governor, however, was not to be stampeded. He still urged conciliation,⁹⁰ and within the year Shelby resigned his brigadier generalship and recommended that Sevier be restored to the office;⁹¹ while Sevier, his term as governor having expired, secured the election of Shelby in his stead. This honor the Welshman declined.⁹²

While these developments were under way, Sevier was in a dilemma. He wished to lead his delegation to

⁸⁵ Williams, p. 157.

⁸⁶ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 381-82; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 705-14; Williams, pp. 143-44.

⁸⁷ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 243-45; XX, 322-24, 326.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, XX, 679-80; Williams, pp. 138 ff. ⁸⁹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 680-83.

⁹⁰ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 5; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 687-88.

⁹¹ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., II, 4; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 689.

⁹² Williams, pp. 158-59.

the North Carolina assembly and come to an agreement with the parent state, but in the meanwhile the governor of Georgia had called upon Franklin, as previously agreed, for 1,500 troops to assist in fighting the Creeks. Lands in the Great Bend were to be the compensation.⁹³ The Franklin assembly had responded by making provision for the levy,⁹⁴ and it looked as though, after all disappointments, the Muscle Shoals project was finally to be carried through to a successful conclusion. Sevier was anxiously awaiting a call for these troops at the time he should have been departing for North Carolina. While he tarried, Caswell's legislature met but did nothing for conciliation because it continued to differ with the governor on this point.

The year 1787 passed away and Sevier still had no word from the governor of Georgia. Finally, in February, 1788, he received a communication saying that Congress had appointed a commission to make peace with the Creeks, and consequently the war would not be prosecuted.⁹⁵ Thus no military aid would be required by Georgia and no land grants in the Great Bend would be forthcoming. This blow was all but fatal to the State of Franklin. Sevier, who had never wished to secede from the parent state, who had accepted the leadership of the new movement merely to prevent it from falling into the hands of his rivals and to save the North Carolina land claims he and his associates possessed, and who had

⁹³ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 381-82; Ramsey, p. 395; Haywood, pp. 185-86.

⁹⁴ Ramsey, pp. 391, 397; Haywood, pp. 186-87; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 46. On October 6, 1788, Martin wrote to Sevier that he had little thought there would ever be any division between them, that their interests were so closely connected that they must lay aside all animosity.—Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 82a.

⁹⁵ Ramsey, pp. 397 ff.; Putnam, p. 288; Williams, pp. 184-88.

worked so arduously to bring the State of Franklin to a peaceful end, now had his government kicked out from under him. The discredited rebel, who had never wished to rebel, was now left to struggle on against those who had started him along the treacherous path.⁹⁶

When Shelby resigned his brigadier general's commission, Joseph Martin was appointed to succeed him and pursue the policy of pacification.⁹⁷ Matters would presumably have gone on as before had not Martin been temporarily absent from his post of duty in February, 1788.⁹⁸ Tipton, acting as an official of North Carolina, took advantage of his absence to bring on a decision with the Franklinites. To this end his party caused a number of Sevier's slaves to be seized toward the payment of North Carolina taxes,⁹⁹ and ordered also the seizure of the Washington County records which were supposed to be in the possession of Sevier.¹⁰⁰ This so enraged Sevier that he raised a force and laid siege to Tipton's house where the owner and about forty of his followers were then staying. Recruits from the northern counties reached the besieged party, and Sevier and his force were driven off, three casualties resulting from the conflict.¹⁰¹ That matters should come to this pass had never been intended by either the North Carolina or the Franklin authorities, and Sevier had no heart for the fight.

By this time most of the original Franklin leaders had given up the struggle as hopeless. David Campbell had

⁹⁶ Alden, "The State of Franklin," *loc. cit.*, pp. 288-89.

⁹⁷ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 693-94. ⁹⁸ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 407.

⁹⁹ Williams, pp. 193-94.

¹⁰⁰ Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, p. 35.

¹⁰¹ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., IX, 47; *Ibid.*, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 367 ff.; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 691-93.

accepted the superior judgeship which he had formerly refused at the hands of North Carolina.¹⁰² The Franklin assembly had ceased to meet, and original Franklinites were being elected to most of the seats which the western counties had in the North Carolina legislature. Sevier's term as governor of Franklin had expired, and he became merely the discredited leader of a band of rebels. According to his own statement, his only object now was to protect himself and his friends from the designs of his enemies.¹⁰³

One recourse was still open to him. He retreated to the southern counties where his staunchest friends held sway and precipitated the worst Indian war his country had known since the end of the Revolution.¹⁰⁴ It was during these campaigns of 1788 that troops under his command made use of a flag of truce to butcher a number of the best friends whom the white men had among the Indian chiefs.¹⁰⁵ Not even the hardy frontier conscience condoned this deed, but it was soon forgotten by the admirers of "Nolachucky Jack."

This Indian war appears to have been undertaken by Sevier with two objects in view: to restore the damaged prestige of the ex-governor of Franklin, and to interrupt the peace plans which Congress had under way, thus making it necessary for Georgia even yet to call on the erstwhile Franklinites for aid against the Creeks.¹⁰⁶ In this way the Muscle Shoals question might be reopened.

Sevier had no such luck. On the contrary, a great misfortune befell him. While General Martin was doing

¹⁰² Williams, p. 192.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 202-3.

¹⁰⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 715-16, 716-18, 718-19; Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., IX, 50; *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 40-45.

¹⁰⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 695-96.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, XXI, 497-98.

all that he could to bring about a reconciliation,¹⁰⁷ Richard Caswell—just at the crucial point when Sevier most needed an advocate at headquarters—was succeeded in the executive chair of North Carolina by Samuel Johnston. This conservative gentleman had never loved the West, and he could not be expected to love Sevier. He lost no time in ordering the arrest of the refractory frontier leader. The execution of the warrant was entrusted to Judge Campbell and General Martin,¹⁰⁸ but neither of these officials relished the job. John Tipton was deterred by no such scruples. When Sevier ventured into Jonesborough in October, 1788, he was followed out of town by Tipton and a band of men who arrested him and sent him under guard across the mountains to Morganton for trial.¹⁰⁹ Sevier had made bond, but a group of his friends came to his assistance and he rode away with them in broad daylight. No attempt was made to follow him.¹¹⁰

Tipton had the upper hand for the time being, but he had few friends, whereas Sevier had many. Even those leaders who had deserted the Franklin movement had done so only in the interest of peace. Several of them were now sitting in the North Carolina legislature, and in the month following Sevier's arrest they secured the passage of an act of pardon and oblivion for all the Franklinites. In spite of Tipton's strenuous objection, Sevier was included among the rest, but he was not to be allowed to hold office under the state.¹¹¹

Notwithstanding this disability, Greene County elected him to the senate in 1789 and that body permitted him

¹⁰⁷ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 82a.

¹⁰⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 694, 697; *American State Papers*, *Indian Affairs*, I, 45.

¹⁰⁹ Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 410; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 699-700.

¹¹⁰ Williams, pp. 226-28. ¹¹¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 955; Williams, 239-40.

to take his seat.¹¹² He was also chosen to sit in the convention of that year which adopted the Federal constitution, and he and all the old Franklin party, along with James Robertson, worked for the consummation of that object. Tipton opposed the adoption.¹¹³

Despite their recent defeat, Sevier's friends were again in power. In the election of officers for the western counties, Tipton and his party were passed over.¹¹⁴ In the session of 1789 the legislature passed a resolution declaring that John Sevier was brigadier general of North Carolina according to the commission issued him in 1784!¹¹⁵ Thus the State of Franklin came to an end to be heard of no more until Andrew Johnson many years later made an attempt to resuscitate it.

Historians have heretofore treated the Franklin movement as a serious rebellion—the cry of the West for freedom. From this point of view, Sevier's policy is incomprehensible. In reality the movement was, according to abundant evidence, a game played between two rival groups of land speculators. One of these groups, headed by Caswell and Blount and supported by Sevier, held vast tracts of western lands obtained through John Armstrong's office. A cession of the western country to Congress might be made so as to secure these claims. This was what the Blount group desired. They tried to accomplish it in 1784, but their plans miscarried through the efforts of Thomas Person and the North Carolina Radicals who secured the repeal of the cession act.

Arthur Campbell and the other speculators who had no share in Blount's and Caswell's plans took advantage of the resentment the cession act engendered among the

¹¹² *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 728-29; XX, 599.

¹¹³ Williams, pp. 238, 240, 242.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

¹¹⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 729; Williams, p. 246.

rank and file of the frontiersmen to bring about a declaration of independence. This was expected to remove the west from under the control of the North Carolina politicians and give the outsiders a chance at the lands. They were thwarted in this scheme by the ingenious Sevier, who extricated himself and his associates from the predicament with neat finesse. He stepped in and took charge of the rebel government. His plan was to bring about, with the aid of Blount and Caswell, a reconciliation with the parent state, and some compromise on the question of separation and the lands. This doubtless could have been effected to the advantage of the group had it not been that Tipton and Cocke coöperated with Person and the Radicals in preventing either an accommodation or a cession. Their aim was to hold the western lands for North Carolina. When the collapse of the Franklin movement finally came, circumstances had so changed that the victors gained little from their triumph.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPANISH CONSPIRACY

SHORTLY after the end of the Revolution, the Spanish authorities at Mobile and Pensacola approached the southern Indians in regard to an alliance. The Chickasaws remained faithful to their treaty of 1783. Neither the Choctaws nor the Cherokees came under Spanish influence to any appreciable extent, but the Creeks were more pliable tools. Alexander McGillivray, a shrewd and unscrupulous half-breed, was their most influential leader at the time. He had important trade relations with the Scotch firm of Panton, Leslie & Company at Pensacola, and he now became the intermediary between his savage people and the Spanish colonial authorities.¹ For some years to come he was to prove the scourge of the southwestern frontiersmen.

While these negotiations were being conducted with the Indians in 1784, the agents of His Catholic Majesty instituted another feature of their program in this quarter by closing the Mississippi to American trade. Though the frontiersmen as yet had little commerce on the river,² the Spaniards hoped that hostile Indians and the prospect of economic strangulation might check the penetration of the new nation into the western country. This antagonistic policy on the part of our neighbors was one of the dominant factors in the early history of the Southwest.

¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 83-84; *C. V. S. P.*, III, 607-8; Haywood, p. 220; Putnam, pp. 221, 456.

² Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, pp. 68, 95.

When in 1785 John Jay was appointed to negotiate a commercial treaty with Spain, he found that the question of the navigation of the Mississippi might hamper the success of his mission, and consequently recommended to Congress that use of the river be relinquished for a term of twenty-five or thirty years.³ The northern states in a body supported this proposition; the southern commonwealths with equal unanimity opposed it.⁴ This was our first important sectional question. Great was the fury of the West when it became aware of the situation, and Congress presently decided to drop the negotiations temporarily.⁵

Yet this was not the end of the matter. The Mississippi remained closed, and Congress was not likely to open it. Neither was any help forthcoming against the southern Indians. The West had become convinced that it was to be offered up on the altar of the North. The frontier leaders were not the type to submit tamely to such sacrifice and they began to shape their course accordingly. In December, 1785, the legislature of North Carolina elected Dr. James White, a new member from one of the eastern counties, a delegate to the Continental Congress.⁶ He was a Catholic from Philadelphia, had studied law and medicine, and was able to speak French, having been educated at the Jesuit school of St. Omer.⁷

During August, 1786, White called on Gardoqui, the Spanish minister, and told him that the western people

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-77.

⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 724-25; XXII, 899-902; Ramsey, pp. 524-26.

⁵ Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 76; Ramsey, pp. 384-85; Putnam, pp. 255-56.

⁶ *S. R. N. C.*, XVII, 264; XVIII, 518; XX, 50.

⁷ A. V. Goodpasture, "Dr. James White, Pioneer, Politician, Lawyer," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 282-91.

were much disgruntled by the action of Congress in regard to the surrender of the navigation of the Mississippi, and that Spain might find them ready to declare their independence and accept her protection in case she would open the river to their trade.⁸ There is little direct evidence that Blount was behind this move, nor does it appear that White had ever visited the West for which he was speaking. However, his letters to Caswell at this very time show that there was something going on behind the scenes in which Blount was interested;⁹ and it should be borne in mind that always it was the cautious Blount's custom to work through confidential agents. He preferred to send oral rather than written communications, and much of his correspondence was strictly confidential. So well did he cover up his tracks that it is, to this day, extremely difficult to follow them. Yet there is enough evidence to show unmistakably that he and Caswell dominated the councils of North Carolina at this time, and the Spanish conspiracy could not have been carried on alone by a few scattered frontier leaders who in all other matters were coöoperating with these two captains of speculation. It was entirely in keeping with Blount's character to dicker on his own behalf with a foreign government, as his subsequent fiasco with Great Britain shows.

In October, 1786, White was chosen by Congress to fill the new office of Indian agent for the Southern Department¹⁰—a queer choice for such a position. His competitor for this place was Joseph Martin,¹¹ who had the backing of Patrick Henry. Martin had lived among

⁸ Whitaker, "Muscle Shoals Speculation," *loc. cit.*, pp. 377 ff.; Whitaker *Spanish-American Frontier*, p. 80.

⁹ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 648-49.

¹⁰ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 766.

¹¹ Weeks, "Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, 458-59; *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 374.

the Indians practically all his life, and had been agent for Virginia to the Cherokees since 1777. He was further qualified by the fact that he sometimes lived with Betsy Ward, daughter of the celebrated Nancy Ward, of one of the most powerful Cherokee families.¹² Martin could always be sure of having inside information on Cherokee politics,¹³ but it was apparently more important for the agent to speak French than it was for him to know the Cherokees. It must have been that his duties were expected to take him to Mobile and New Orleans rather than to the Indian villages. Caswell was governor of North Carolina at the time, and Blount was White's colleague in Congress. Such facts are eloquent.¹⁴

The conspiracy, however, was not yet ripe. Congress recanted from the proposal to surrender the navigation of the Mississippi, and there were no immediate results from the conversation between White and Gardoqui. The Indian agent presently undertook the responsibilities of his new position and devoted his attention to McGil-livray and the cause of peace with the Creeks.¹⁵

There was dire need for such an undertaking. The Creek nation received in 1785 its first supply of goods under the Spanish treaty of 1784. In 1786 it began waging war upon the Georgia and Cumberland frontiersmen.¹⁶ Sevier now made his plans for the State of Franklin to aid Georgia in a joint campaign against the Creeks. During the next year Congress undertook to negotiate with the savages,¹⁷ White used his talents in

¹² Weeks, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

¹³ *C. V. S. P.*, III, 608.

¹⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 648-49.

¹⁵ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 19-20, 20-21.

¹⁶ Whitaker *Spanish-American Frontier*, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Steele Papers*, I, 38-44.

this direction at the same time,¹⁸ and Governor Caswell carried on a correspondence with McGillivray through Robertson and Bledsoe.¹⁹ Peace might have been restored by these efforts had it not fallen out that a brother of James Robertson was at this juncture killed by a roving band of Indians. This was too much for the old pioneer, who hastily raised a force and gave chase. He fell upon a party of Indians and French traders who had collected at Coldwater, near Muscle Shoals, and several Creeks were killed in the encounter.²⁰ The natives always felt it to be incumbent upon them to retaliate in such a case, and the war was continued.

So great were the sufferings of the settlers in Cumberland during this period that Robertson and Bledsoe, with the aid of Blount, drew up a document complaining of the hardships of the West and asking that the Mississippi be opened to its trade. This was sent to Governor Johnston with a request that he intercede with Congress in behalf of the western settlements.²¹ Johnston felt little sympathy for the westerners, thinking they had brought their troubles on themselves, but he forwarded the appeal to Dr. White with unfavorable comments. White took the matter up with Gardoqui, and it was thus that the Spanish conspiracy was renewed in the spring of 1788.²² At the same time that White was

¹⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XX, 713; D. L. McMurry, "The Indian Policy of the Federal Government and the Economic Development of the Southwest," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 32.

¹⁹ *S. R. N. C.*, XX, 622.

²⁰ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., I, 69; *S. R. N. C.*, XX, 712; XXII, 675; *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 454-55; *South-Western Monthly*, II, 197-201; "Robertson Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, I, 76-77, 79-80.

²¹ A. V. Goodpasture, "William Blount and the Old Southwest Territory," *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 3.

²² *S. R. N. C.*, XXI, 465-67; Williams, p. 230; Goodpasture, "Dr. James White," *loc. cit.*, p. 285; Henderson, "The Spanish Conspiracy in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, III, 229 ff.

negotiating with the Spanish minister at Philadelphia, Robertson and Bledsoe were negotiating with McGillivray.²³

Having arrived at an understanding with Gardoqui, White resigned his Indian agency and journeyed to the Holston country to devote his attention to Sevier. The defeated leader of the State of Franklin shortly thereafter opened correspondence with the Spanish minister.²⁴

It is usually believed that it was Sevier's defeat by Tipton in February, 1788, which furnished the immediate incentive for this intrigue.²⁵ The discredited governor is assumed to have been ripe material for such an undertaking. Negotiations with the Spaniards and war against the Indians whom they were proposing to protect were not necessarily incompatible activities; but such a thesis does not explain why James Robertson, Anthony Bledsoe, and Daniel Smith engaged in the same intrigue at the same time,²⁶ nor why the district formed of the Cumberland counties was christened "Mero" in honor of Governor Miró in August, 1788, by the North Carolina legislature.²⁷ This was done at the instance of James Robertson and quietly put through the assembly.²⁸ The frontiersmen who believed, and

²³ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 252-53; Putnam, pp. 450-51; John Allison, "The Mero District," *American Historical Magazine*, I, 120; "Correspondence of General James Robertson," *American Historical Magazine*, I, 82-84.

²⁴ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 83a; Williams, pp. 232-34; Haywood, p. 200.

²⁵ Whitaker, "The Muscle Shoals Speculation," *loc. cit.*, pp. 377 ff.; Henderson, "The Spanish Conspiracy," *loc. cit.*, pp. 229 ff.

²⁶ Goodpasture, "Dr. James White," *loc. cit.*, p. 287; Haywood, pp. 245, 254-55; Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, pp. 92-93.

²⁷ The spelling was unintentionally altered by the frontiersmen to fit the pronunciation.

²⁸ Allison, *Dropped Stitches*, p. 87; Allison, "The Mero District," *loc. cit.*, p. 116.

doubtless with good reason, that the Spaniards were setting the Indians on to take their scalps²⁹ were the last people who would be expected to name their governments for the hated foreigners. It is also astonishing that the assembly gave its approval to such an act without a protest. Only the influence of Caswell and Blount and the logic of their plans can account for it.

These two magnates and their friends had long desired a cession of the western land to Congress in order to secure their claims and enhance the value of their estates through the better protection which Congress might afford. To this end they had worked unremittingly for years, leaving no stone unturned, even conniving at rebellion against the state whose destiny they so largely dictated. They had failed to secure the cession, and when Congress seemed on the point of deserting the West by giving up the navigation of the Mississippi, it must have occurred to them that an agreement with Spain was the only way in which the river could be opened to trade and the Indians called off from their war upon the settlements. Unless these objects could be achieved, there was no hope of enticing new settlers to the West to increase the value of lands.³⁰ That this policy was in contemplation is clearly indicated by White's conversation with Gardoqui in 1786.

It is here stated that, though there was no opposition in the assembly, much unfavorable comment was later to be heard out of doors.

²⁹ Whitaker says that the Spanish government never authorized the Indians to begin hostilities (*Spanish-American Frontier*, p. 61). There are doubtless no documents in the Spanish archives to prove that they did, but this by no means proves that they did not. He admits that Panton was guilty, and Panton hardly worked alone. Governments had a way of covertly encouraging activities which their Christian principles did not permit them to sanction openly. Equivocating men and governments do not purposely leave milestones to point the way back to their dubious dealings.

³⁰ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 455.

In 1788 there arose new reasons for pursuing this line of attack. When White renewed his negotiations in that year, North Carolina had not yet acted on the new constitution. The government which this document proposed to establish would be far more effective for the protection and development of the West than the old Congress could possibly have been. Blount had had a part in framing it, and he and his group were strong Federalists from the first. So also were Sevier, Robertson, and practically all the leaders in western North Carolina. Nothing would please this group more than to have their state adopt the new form of government, for the cession of the western lands was taken for granted as an inevitable consequence of such an act. Why, then, were Blount's western friends interested in an intrigue with Spain at the very time the question of the adoption of the constitution was up for decision?

Willie Jones, Thomas Person, and the Radicals were opposed to adoption, and they had the ear of the people in the matter. In order to defeat them, it was necessary to bring all possible pressure to bear; and telling the people they would lose their western lands entirely if they did not cede them, would make a most forceful argument at just the time it was needed. It is significant, in this connection, that there was no secrecy about the Spanish intrigue. Whereas no one has previously accused Blount and Caswell of having been privy to the move, the conspiracy itself was given wide publicity.³¹ The astute Blount well knew how to use his tools. White apparently was his agent and Sevier, Robertson, and Smith his instruments.

Yet, suppose North Carolina, in spite of another

³¹ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 81-82.

western rebellion, could not be induced to make the cession. Then the intrigue would have to be carried on. An understanding with Spain was important in case no understanding could be had with the east. Thus matters fell out for a time. North Carolina rejected the constitution in August, 1788, and the intrigue was continued with zeal. White went to New Orleans to consult with Miró;³² and Robertson, Smith, and Sevier made advances for an alliance.³³ It was proposed that the western country secede from the East, that the frontiersmen take an oath of allegiance to the King of Spain, that they be left free to manage their local affairs, and be allowed to trade down the Mississippi.³⁴ Spain would thus secure the sovereignty, and the speculators the lands and trade of the West. Meanwhile, in January, 1789, Sevier's old following drew up the plan of a voluntary association among the westerners for their own defense, and arranged to urge upon North Carolina once more their desire to enter the Union.³⁵

It is surprising that there should have been any hope of inducing the liberty-loving pioneers of the West to take an oath of allegiance to His Catholic Majesty, even though it were looked on as a mere matter of form. Indeed, it is not certain any such hope existed. The intrigue, after all, was merely a correspondence in which a few leaders were involved.³⁶ As there was so little actual trade down the Mississippi at the time,³⁷ the economically primitive and self-sufficient settlers

³² Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, pp. 110-11.

³³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 3, 51. See also "Robertson Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, I, 85-86.

³⁴ Moore and Foster, *Tennessee, the Volunteer State*, I, 139.

³⁵ S. R. N. C., XXII, 722-25; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 48.

³⁶ Williams, p. 231.

³⁷ Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, p. 95.

of the West could have had little active interest in the possibility of its future development. Fur was still the principal product of the frontier, and this did not require river transportation. There is a possibility that the speculators meant to try to carry through an alliance with Spain in case North Carolina would neither adopt the constitution nor cede her western domain. Yet, it is probable they merely wished to continue holding the threat as a Damoclean sword over the state, thinking they might thereby persuade her to act as desired. This seems more likely in view of the fact that the legislature, shortly after the rejection of the constitution in 1788, called another convention to reconsider the matter.

Before this second convention met, the interest of the Spanish officials in conspiracy had cooled. At first they seem to have hoped they could secure the separation of the western country from the East by opening the Mississippi to the frontiersmen.³⁸ They now proposed that, instead of making an alliance, the frontiersmen should leave their own lands and settle on those under Spanish authority.³⁹ It can well be imagined that the speculators were not interested in thus draining their lands of population, and the western leaders did their utmost to discourage such a move. Dr. White made his way from New Orleans to Nashville and gave his aid to Robertson in opposing it.⁴⁰

The year 1789 opened in gloom for the western Carolinians. Their state was left out of the new Union, and they could expect no assistance against hostile Indians. The hope of a more friendly attitude on the

³⁸ Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, II, pt. 2, 172.

³⁹ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 87-88; Putnam, p. 453.

⁴⁰ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 792.

part of Spain was soon dispelled. The Greeks maintained their enmity, and the future looked as sombre as the present. On July 7 Robertson wrote to Daniel Smith:

All the encouragement I can give the people is that I have no doubt but the next Assembly will cede us to Congress, it being the general opinion of every thinking person that our not being immediately under the protection of the United States causes our Southern neighbors to set the Indians on us, imagining our distress will oblige us to take protection from them. Indeed, this summer's war has distracted the minds of many; those who have the greatest aversion to a measure of that nature say that without an alteration of times they must leave the country or become Spaniards. When at the last Assembly, I had doubts these advantages would be taken of our situation, but it was impossible to convince those against the cession our dangers were so great, or they were indifferent what became of us.

. . . I hope you can leave home to attend the next General Assembly. It will be utterly out of my power and will, if I can keep possession by staying, which I am determined to do or fall in the attempt till I can hear from the next General Assembly, and if no alteration takes place, God only knows what may be the consequence.⁴¹

There is no question about the close relations existing between Robertson, Smith, and Blount, or the identity of their landed interests. There is no reason why Robertson should not have written freely to Smith, and this letter shows that these western men had never ceased to be Federalists. The Spanish intrigue was only a last resort in case a cession to the Union could not be secured. Blount's connection with the affair is indicated by numerous facts. It is proven by a letter he wrote to Robertson in 1794 in which he stated, "Don't neglect to send me a copy of McGillivray's letter to yourself and Colonel Bledsoe. It is a matter of much conse-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 790-91.

quence. . . .”⁴² Caswell’s connection is proved by a letter Robertson wrote to McGillivray on August 3, 1788, as follows: “I received your favors by Messrs. Hoggatt & Ewing which have given great satisfaction to the country in general. I transmitted copies to Governor Caswell and have since seen them published in the Kentucky *Gazette*. ”⁴³

Thus Blount and Caswell were scanning the correspondence of their henchmen with the plotting half-breed, McGillivray, the intermediary between the Creeks and the Spaniards. They were not only fully cognizant of the intrigue that was hatching, but there are strong indications that they were dictating its progress.

⁴² “Robertson Correspondence,” *loc. cit.*, III, 354-55. Bledsoe had been killed by the Indians in 1788.

⁴³ “Robertson Correspondence,” *loc. cit.*, I, 81-82; John Allison, “The Mero District,” *American Historical Magazine*, I, 115-27. See also Caswell to Bledsoe and Robertson, Feb. 27, 1787, *S. R. N. C.*, XX, 622.

CHAPTER VII

THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION AND THE CESSION OF 1790

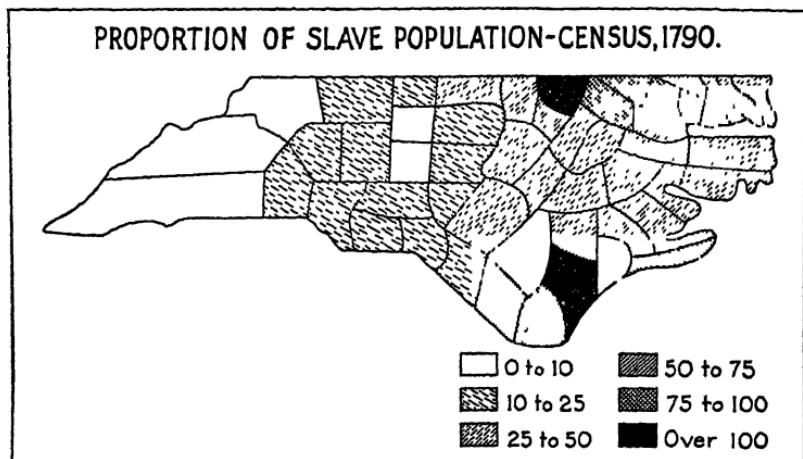
AFTER the repeal of the cession act, the Radicals remained in power and controlled the destinies of North Carolina until 1787. During these years there was no material change in the alignment of the various factions. Johnston and Hooper continued to lead the Conservative forces of the eastern counties, while Caswell and Blount maintained a position somewhat between Radicals and Conservatives, being primarily concerned with their own speculative interests and ready to serve them as best they might.¹ Thomas Person and Willie Jones continued to lead the liberal group of Radicals, but were not ready to resort to the demagoguery which frequently characterized the position of the more typical partisans such as Griffith Rutherford and Timothy Bloodworth. Curiously enough, the most powerful single force in the politics of the state during these years was Willie Jones, the wealthy and cultured democrat and friend of Thomas Jefferson. He was the sixth largest slaveholder in the state, and was fastidious in his personal and social habits. He loved political power, and was attempting in North Carolina the same rôle which his more famous Virginia friend was playing in his own state.²

It was because Jones and Person agreed with the more extreme Radicals in their opposition to the cession of

¹ McRee, II, 273-74; Ashe, II, 113-14.

² McRee, II, 217, 231; Ashe, II, 18.

western lands that Blount and Caswell, with the aid of the more consistent Conservatives, were unable to procure such a cession during the years under review,³ and while the State of Franklin was in revolt. Nor was this the only evidence of Radical control. An act was passed in 1785 emitting an issue of one hundred thousand pounds of legal tender paper money.⁴ In 1786 it was enacted that masters whose slaves were executed should no longer be reimbursed by the state for their loss,⁵ and a



tax was imposed upon slaves brought into the state.⁶ The principle of taxation which had been adopted in 1784 was retained throughout this period. All lands were assessed at the same rate per hundred acres, and each poll, slave and free, paid at the same rate as three hundred acres of land. But on account of the trouble with the State of Franklin, some reduction was made in the levy on lands lying beyond the mountains.⁷

Though there are evidences of liberalism in this

³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 54.

⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 722.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 809; Ashe, II, 17.

⁶ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 792-94; Ashe, II, 21.

⁷ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 731-32, 802-3, 885-86.

program, it represents no material progress in the direction of real democracy. That the Radicals insisted on denying the right of self-government to the western settlers while the Conservatives were ready to grant it, would seem strange to one not familiar with the various interests which lay back of the situation. Whichever party was in power, the legislature was, as a rule, more responsive to the interests of the lawmakers themselves than to the welfare of the people. Only in the rare instances where the voters were appealed to on specific issues could they make their voices clearly heard.

The most exciting issue of this period of Radical control came up in connection with the old question of the confiscation acts. In 1785 the assembly enacted a law directing the courts to refuse to entertain any suit brought at the instance of any Tory whose property had been confiscated by the state.⁸ In 1786, under the leadership of Justice Samuel Ashe, a wealthy eastern politician and Radical leader,⁹ the superior court questioned the validity of this act, but advised the parties to settle their differences out of court.¹⁰ In 1787 this tribunal formally declared the act void.¹¹ This suspension of judgment for a year deprived North Carolina of the honor of being the first state to have an act of assembly declared void by its courts.¹² Ashe stated that he had a part in framing the constitution of 1776, and he understood it to be the intention of the convention that the courts should safeguard the fundamental law against legislative usurpation.¹³ Iredell concurred in this opinion and there is every reason to believe that the judges were correct in their understanding.¹⁴ This

⁸ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 730-31.

⁹ McRee, I, 367.

¹⁰ Ashe, II, 44-47.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, 52.

¹² *Ibid.*, II, 53.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, 51.

¹⁴ McRee, II, 172-76.

fact, along with the further one that no provision was made for amending the constitution, forms an interesting commentary on the spirit of the convention of 1776. The Fathers had no great confidence in posterity.

The action of the court in annulling an act of the assembly created intense excitement, especially in view of the nature of the case involved. The bar and the assembly, the members of which bodies had considerable interest in Tory property, were up in arms against the bench.¹⁵ Though the court was made up of men who, until now, had classified as good Radicals, impeachment charges were brought against them.¹⁶ These charges were not tried, however, until the Radicals had fallen from power. The result was that the judges were thanked for their conduct instead of being convicted.¹⁷

That the hold of the Radicals was weakening could have been noted as early as 1786, when the assembly provided for the election of delegates to represent North Carolina in the convention which was to meet at Philadelphia in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation.¹⁸ Caswell, Alexander Martin, Davie, Spaight, and Willie Jones were later chosen to fulfill this trust.¹⁹

In 1787 the Radicals were defeated in the elections. This would appear to have been due to a concerted but quiet effort on the part of those interested in the creation of a stronger Federal government. The result was the choice of Johnston to succeed Caswell as governor²⁰ and the calling of a state convention to ratify the Federal constitution,²¹ which had just come from the hands of its framers. But in spite of this absorbing new issue, the Conservatives could not drop the old standard and they

¹⁵ Ashe, II, 44-47. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 51. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 52. ¹⁸ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 791.

¹⁹ Ashe, II, 53. ²⁰ McRee, II, 183-84. ²¹ Ashe, II, 79 ff.

signalized their return to power by passing, as the first act of the assembly, a provision that the treaty of 1783 was to be considered a part of the law of the land, and the courts were directed to act accordingly.²² This, of course, related especially to those clauses of the treaty which had as their object the safeguarding of Tory property in America. Other manifestations of conservative principles were the refusal to issue more paper money and a provision for maintaining a sinking fund for the retirement of the issue of 1785.²³ The result was that the currency of the state began to appreciate in value.²⁴

Willie Jones and his friends used all their arts to defeat the adoption of the new form of government. The Virginia Anti-Federalists, Mason and Henry, whose position was greatly strengthened by the unfriendly attitude of the northern states toward the development of the West, heartened them in their struggle.²⁵ The people were told that the new system of courts would bring about a ruthless collection of debts,²⁶ and, of course, local pride and local prejudice were aroused. In addition to this, the office-holders as a group had their own reasons for opposing the change.²⁷ In the election of delegates to the ratification convention, the Radicals won a decisive victory, Blount, Hooper, and many of the Federalists being defeated.²⁸

Before this body met, however, a change had taken

²² *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 885.

²² *Ibid.*, XXIV, 885-86.

²⁴ McRee, II, 275-76; Ashe, II, 102.

²⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 271-72; Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, p. 49; Putnam, pp. 453-54; Ashe, II, 85; McRee, II, 266-67.

²⁶ H. M. Wagstaff, "State Rights and Political Parties in North Carolina," *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, XXIV, 21-22; McRee, II, 239.

²⁷ McRee, II, 216-17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 222-23.

place in the political situation. Contrary to expectation, Virginia had ratified.²⁹ The organization of the new government was now assured. In case North Carolina refused to ratify, she would become an isolated commonwealth and, with the Franklin trouble unsettled, with the Spanish and Indians preying upon her frontier, and with her trade subject to unfriendly discrimination, her position would be a difficult one. Under these circumstances, there was nothing for Jones to do but shift his ground. He gave up the idea of demanding rejection and adopted a plan to suspend final action until certain amendments, similar to those already proposed by Virginia, should be added to the new instrument. On the floor of the convention, he quoted a letter from Jefferson advocating this policy,³⁰ and the advice was followed. Amendments were proposed and immediate adoption was defeated. The vote on the measure showed that the Radicals had carried nearly every county in the state except those in the Albemarle Sound region, where most of the Conservative leaders resided. Even the Wilmington district was carried by the Radicals. Tipton and his followers from across the mountains voted against adoption.³¹ The economic issue between debtor and creditor had been drawn very clearly during the contest. The whole policy of the Conservative Federalists favored the former, while the Radical Anti-Federalists favored the latter.³² But the vote did not follow economic lines.

By no means did the Conservatives consider that the question was now settled. They carried the August

²⁹ Ashe, II, 87.

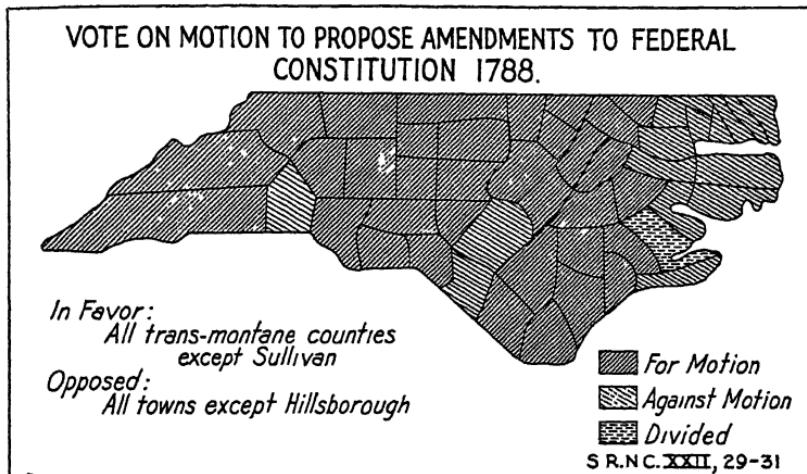
³⁰ McRee, II, 230-31, 234.

³¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 24-26, 29-31; Ashe, II, 88-89.

³² McRee, II, 243, 245-46, 260-61.

elections and had a majority in the assembly which met in November. This body issued a call for a second convention to take up once more the question of ratification.³³ Another heated campaign followed and William Blount, who had failed of election in 1788, was now successful along with a large majority of Federalists.

They were assisted in their campaign by the Continental Congress. The treaty of Hopewell, drafted



under auspices of that body, had aroused much resentment in North Carolina, and William Blount had been the main spokesman against the treaty. Such a feeling would naturally militate strongly against the adoption of a new government whose arm would be more powerful and whose treaties would be the law of the land. It was perhaps to allay this sentiment, while the question of adoption was before the people, that Congress in 1787 provided for a new commission to make treaties with the Creeks and Cherokees which should supersede the Hopewell instrument.³⁴ North Carolina, South Carolina,

³³ Ashe, II, 97-98.

³⁴ H. M. Wagstaff (ed.), *The Papers of John Steele*, I, 19-20.

and Georgia were each to appoint one commissioner and pay a share of the expenses. Georgia and South Carolina acted at once, but Governor Johnston, not being interested in western lands, would not act until the assembly met in the fall of 1788. A commissioner was then appointed for the state and North Carolina appropriated toward the expenses of the new treaties two thousand five hundred pounds worth of goods which had been provided in 1783 to pay the natives for the lands which were now to be secured.³⁵

All this showed a conciliatory spirit on the part of Congress, which had done little heretofore to make itself popular with the western interests. The move accomplished nothing except perhaps in a political way, for the Indians failed to meet the commissioners when notified to attend, and no treaty was negotiated.³⁶ The problem of making peace with the Creeks and Cherokees was passed on to the new government.

When the second convention met, the proposed amendments had already been taken up by Congress and the constitution was ratified by a majority as large as that which had opposed the adoption the previous year.³⁷ This reversal of judgment is accounted for primarily by the fact that the Federal Union had come into existence between the two elections. The people of North Carolina were willing to prevent the formation of a new government, but not to leave their state in isolation after the Union had been formed.³⁸ However, the leading Radicals, except Jones, kept up their opposition to the bitter end, and the counties which

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 22-24; 36-37; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 26, 31.

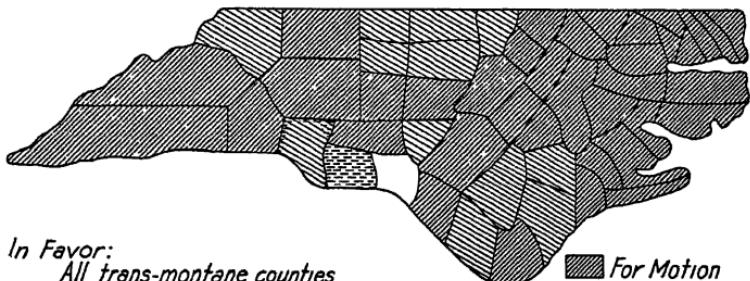
³⁶ *Steele Papers*, I, 45-46, 50; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 35, 37.

³⁷ *McRee*, II, 260.

³⁸ *Trinity College Historical Papers*, XIV, 82-95; *McRee*, II, 239-40; *Ashe*, II, 111.

voted against adoption in the second convention were those whence these leaders hailed.³⁹ The old Regulator counties, in which the strength of Jones chiefly lay, changed sides and voted for ratification. The west went as solidly for the constitution as did the east, and nearly every delegate from across the mountains cast his vote in its favor.⁴⁰ This about-face of the frontiersmen is accounted for by the fact that the State of Franklin had

VOTE ON MOTION TO ADOPT FEDERAL CONSTITUTION-1789



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now ended its career and the former Franklinites were again representing the Holston country in the councils of North Carolina. The Tipton followers were defeated in the election of delegates to the convention of 1789 and the friends of Sevier took their places. He and Robertson were both under the influence of William Blount, and they were both Federalists.⁴¹ This is enough to account for the stand taken by the transmontane delegates, for

³⁹ Weeks, "Thomas Person," *loc. cit.*, pp. 26 ff.; *Trinity College Historical Papers*, XIV, 79-81; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 47-49.

⁴⁰ Wagstaff, *op. cit.*, p. 28; Williams, p. 238.

⁴¹ *Steele Papers*, I, 27-30; McRee, II, 251.

these two men and their supporters once more controlled the western country.

As a logical consequence of her entrance into the Union, North Carolina, in the first assembly which met under the new government, took up the question of ceding her western lands to Congress. The Radicals made an attempt to upset the plans of Blount and the Conservatives by introducing a bill providing for the granting of independence to the transmontane people and opening a new office for the sale of western lands by the state.⁴² This, along with certain other evidence, makes it fairly clear that the opposition which the Radicals all along had maintained to the cession had been largely in the interest of such exploitation. Blount already had his claims staked out in the west and worked to exclude new competitors from the field; but Person, though he had large claims himself, could see the political advantage of opening this territory to newcomers. It appears to have been a sordid piece of business on both sides, but the Radical measure was lost and a bill providing for cession to the Federal government was carried.

The terms of this act were practically the same as those under which the cession of 1784 had been made. All claims previously derived from the state were to remain good, thus securing the purchasers under the act of 1783. Grants might still be issued to satisfy the claims of continental soldiers under the act of the same year, and thus the state would continue to appropriate lands in the ceded area. It was also provided that slavery could never be abolished without the consent of the people, and that a state or states should be erected in due season out

⁴² *S. R. N. C.*, XXI, 257, 271; Williams, p. 243.

of the territory thus surrendered.⁴³ This measure was favored by the eastern Conservatives, by the westerners themselves, and by Willie Jones. Only Person and the extreme Radicals opposed it.⁴⁴

Though Patrick Henry regarded this act as a piece of tyranny because it surrendered a people to another government without their consent, yet the people who were thus surrendered received their alienation gladly. They would now have a government of their own and some prospect of protection against the Spaniards and the Indians. This had become, during the dark days of 1788, their only hope. The old Congress had shown so little sympathy for the West that this Federalism of the frontier, especially in view of Henry's attitude and that which the Franklinites had taken after the cession of 1784, is, on the surface, not a little surprising.⁴⁵ It seems likely that, left to themselves, the backwoodsmen would have seen many of the disadvantages and few of the advantages which they would reap from a strong central government. The fact that they had confidence, in spite of the unfriendly attitude of the northern states, in the protection of a strong Union indicates that it was the leaders rather than the people who made the decision. The masses were likely to judge by the past, and judging by the past, they could have had little confidence in any Congress that might be established. Only a leader of vision could foresee the future and realize that a strong government could not ignore its frontier. Such a leader was William Blount. It is hardly hazarding too much to say that his influence was

⁴³ *S. R. N. C.*, XXV, 4-6; *American State Papers, Lands*, I, 108-10.

⁴⁴ *S. R. N. C.*, XXI, 468-69; McRee, II, 246-47; Williams, pp. 239-41.

⁴⁵ Putnam, pp. 453-54.

primarily responsible for the Federalism of transmontane North Carolina. His plans had been all but wrecked in 1784. Now they were brought to triumphant fruition. The cession had been accomplished under conditions which safeguarded his interests.⁴⁶ Caswell, for many years the partner in his plans, had died in 1789, and Blount was now left to carry on alone.

One consequence of these developments was the seating of the Conservatives firmly in power, which position they retained until 1795. Blount was anxious to represent his state in the Federal Senate. He had worked as hard as any man for the adoption of the constitution, but, unfortunately for him, his motives were understood, and he was not admired by the regular Conservatives. He was passed over, and Samuel Johnston and Benjamin Hawkins became the first senators from North Carolina.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Steele Papers*, I, 29, note 21.

⁴⁷ McRee, II, 272.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUTHWEST TERRITORY

IN THE year 1788, with the Federal constitution before the people for adoption and the State of Franklin struggling through its spasmodic final stages, there was a new flurry in the field of western land speculations. Sevier, engaged at the time in the Spanish conspiracy, approached Miró in regard to his favorite scheme of a settlement at Muscle Shoals.¹ At about the same time Joseph Martin wrote to McGil-livray to secure his consent to a settlement on the Tombigbee,² in what is now the state of Alabama, but in territory which then was claimed by Georgia, the United States, and Spain.

Nothing came of either proposition. They were superseded the next year by the organization under authority of Georgia of the first three Yazoo land companies. The South Carolina company, headed by Moultrie and other prominent men of that state, received a grant centering about Walnut Hills, or modern Vicksburg; the Tennessee company, which included Sevier among its more active members, secured a claim to the Muscle Shoals area; while the Virginia company, in which Patrick Henry was active, was granted territory near Chickasaw Bluffs, where Memphis was to rise.³ This claim overlapped that of the Tennessee company at the Muscle Shoals.⁴

¹ Whitaker, "Muscle Shoals Speculation," *loc. cit.*, p. 379.

² C. V. S. P., IV, 454-55; Weeks, "Joseph Martin and the Revolution in the West," *loc. cit.*, pp. 466-69; Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, pp. 128-29.

³ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 22-23; Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box S-1, No. 32; *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 107.

⁴ C. V. S. P., IV, 428-29; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., II, 37.

Each organization made plans for settling its grant. Henry tried to induce Martin to go into the Chickasaw country to look after interests of the Virginia company, offering to make him a partner as a reward for the service.⁵ But Martin replied that Sevier already had stationed his agent, Bennett Ballew, in the Indian nation, and that it would be dangerous for him to go unless he had an appointment from Congress. He asked Henry to use his influence to secure him the agency to the Chickasaws,⁶ which official capacity he could utilize to look after the interests of his land company. But his enemies, including Sevier's friends and Governor Mathews of Georgia, published his clandestine correspondence of the previous year with McGillivray and put him on the defensive.⁷ Blount and his friends stood by Martin and he was exonerated,⁸ but he did not secure the appointment.

Sevier also, with an eye to his land interests, was a candidate for the place, but there was a more powerful man in the field. North Carolina ceded her western lands to Congress at this juncture, and William Blount, with the help of Daniel Smith, was made not only governor of the Territory but Indian agent as well.⁹ He frankly admitted that his interest in the dual position was due to his investments in western lands.¹⁰

This prince of western speculators had all along believed that Federal authority was better calculated to protect the frontier than was the authority of any state.¹¹

⁵ *Southern History Association Publications*, VI, 30-32; Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., 87a.

⁶ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 704-5, 721; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 56; *Steele Papers*, I, 51-52; *Southern History Association Publications*, VI, 28-29; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., II, 27.

⁷ *C. V. S. P.*, IV, 452.

⁸ Weeks, "Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, p. 470.

⁹ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 218-19.

¹⁰ *Steele Papers*, I, 57, 67-70.

¹¹ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 20.

He now became the agent of that authority on the particular frontier where his personal interests were most heavily involved. He had protested, as the agent of North Carolina, against the treaties of Hopewell. It now became his duty to enforce these and all other Federal treaties as the law of the land. A settlement at Muscle Shoals would be within the territory guaranteed to the Indians by the Hopewell instrument, and hence it was Blount's duty to oppose the wish of Sevier and his associates to establish such a settlement. Sevier himself had already helped to prevent the establishment of a colony there under the auspices of Henry and the Virginia company. It was left for Blount to attempt to prevent the establishment of a settlement by the Tennessee company in 1791.¹² There was naturally bitter enmity engendered by this business between Martin and Sevier and the other members of the two companies; but if any ill feeling resulted between Sevier and Blount, their correspondence betrays no evidence of it.¹³

In fact, Blount proceeded to fill the offices of the Territory with the supporters of the defunct State of Franklin. Nothing could reflect more clearly than this fact the coöperation which, in spite of the fretful career of the State of Franklin, had been maintained between the Blount-Caswell group and the Sevier group ever since the opening of the land offices in 1783. Sevier himself became brigadier general for the District of Washington, while James Robertson held the same appointment for the District of Mero. Daniel Smith was appointed secretary as well as surveyor for the Territory

¹² *Ibid.*, Kings Mountain MSS., IX, 65; Putnam, p. 331; Roosevelt, III, pt. I, 256-57; "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 192.

¹³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 20.

—a strategic position and one which was always bestowed with discretion. The private secretaries to the governor were his half-brother Willie (pronounced as though it were spelled Wylie), and Hugh Lawson White, son of Colonel James White.¹⁴

It was as governor of the Southwest Territory that Blount showed most clearly his mastery of men. In those days when the public domain was new, the government was possessed of many valuable perquisites in connection with its administration and control over the land titles. Working through this medium, Blount had attached to himself in North Carolina, and continued to hold in his new position, an important array of friends and family connections who were ambitious in respect to the goods of this world, and more especially in respect to lush acres. So crafty was the governor in concealing his operations that one is led to suspect much more than he can prove in this connection.¹⁵ There is, however, ample reason to believe that, in addition to the men previously mentioned as his associates, there should be added the names of John Armstrong, entry-taker under the act of 1783, Martin Armstrong, surveyor of military lands under the same act, and William Terrell Lewis, Stockley Donelson, and William Polk, surveyors of lands entered in John Armstrong's office. Since the act of 1783 was the work of Blount, Caswell, and their henchmen, it is not likely

¹⁴ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 218-19; Ramsey, p. 547. Yet it seems that the surveyors appointed under North Carolina authority retained their functions under the Territory.—*Knoxville Gazette*, April 24, 1795.

¹⁵ On January 6, 1792, he wrote to Smith: "My _____ is not safe enough to trust more to paper." Such secrecy is quite characteristic.—*American Historical Magazine*, VI, 220. Again he wrote to Robertson: "I wish you would take care and divide my public from my Private Letters,"—*Ibid.*, IV, 258-59.

that the legislature filled the offices created under it with men who were not acceptable to its authors. The names of James Winchester, John Adair,¹⁶ and Colonel James White¹⁷ (who is not to be confused with Dr. James White¹⁸ involved in the Spanish conspiracy), would seem also to belong in the list of associates.

Little remains except circumstantial evidence to illumine the relations existing between these men and the governor of the Territory. But White, for instance, was one of the surveyors who spied out the lands for certain speculators purchasing under the act of 1783; and it is inconceivable that it was mere chance that led Blount to establish the new government in the heart of the wilderness where even an embryo town did not exist, and on lands which White had entered at the confluence of the Holston and French Broad. The site apparently was selected even before the governor visited the Territory¹⁹ and before the title to the soil had been secured from the Indians. Blount was not the man thus to enhance immeasurably the value of another's property unless in so doing he also augmented his own fortune. Further, White's young son, Hugh Lawson, was, as already noted, made private secretary to the governor, and in accordance with Blount's practice of nepotism, such offices were invariably reserved for his family connections and business associates.

His interests having forced him to reverse his position and become the champion of Federal treaties, Blount now proceeded to negotiate one for his new masters. In 1791 he met the Cherokees at White's fort. The

¹⁶ K. White, "John Adair, the Entry-Taker," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, VIII, 112-18; *Knoxville Gazette*, supplement, July 14, 1792.

¹⁷ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, IV, 78.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 174-75.

¹⁹ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 217-18.

foundations of Knoxville, prospective capital of the Territory, had not yet been laid.²⁰ Booths and temporary huts were erected for the reception of the negotiators, white and red, and the Indians ceremoniously received the governor who came with military pomp, and sat near his marquee, surrounded by his aides, as the feathered chiefs were presented.²¹

The treaty of Holston which was here drawn up guaranteed to the natives the lines established at Hopewell in 1785 except for one important cession. No new lands had been acquired by treaty since that negotiated by Avery and his associates in 1777. Several counties nevertheless had been established south of the line thus agreed on, and North Carolina recognized the rights of those who had settled as far south as the French Broad. The State of Franklin had gone farther and opened up the country between the French Broad and the Little Tennessee. Blount now acquired all this settled area and an adjoining tract of unsettled land lying west of the Tennessee River. It is unnecessary to state that the governor himself held claims in the area.²² He expressed himself as being perfectly satisfied with the boundaries established, though the grant made by the natives was comparatively small.²³

It was not until the winter of 1791-1792 that the streets of Knoxville were surveyed and Blount constructed a weatherboarded log house to serve as the executive mansion.²⁴ The purchasers of lots in the new

²⁰ *Ibid.*, IX, 179-82.

²¹ Ramsey, pp. 554-57.

²² Tennessee Archives, Land Office Records.

²³ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 280-81.

²⁴ A. V. Goodpasture, "William Blount and the Old Southwest Territory," *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 8; "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 280-81; Ramsey, p. 558.

town included John Adair, David Campbell, David Allison, George Roulstone, John Rhea, John Carter, R. M. Carrick, William Blount, and many other names familiar in the early history of East Tennessee.²⁵ Knox County was established at this time, and the infant capital became also the county seat. James White was appointed colonel of the new jurisdiction.²⁶

Blount knew how to use North Carolina politicians who had an eye to the main chance, and frontier magnates such as Sevier and Robertson who could serve as his field agents. There was yet a third group of men whom he took care to bind to his service for their particular abilities. These were the frontier lawyers. Until the period of the Revolution all the lawyers had come from the old and conservative tidewater communities, but such men as Samuel Johnston and William Hooper were not popular with men like Blount and Caswell. They were not sufficiently pliable. Since the older barristers found frontier practice thoroughly distasteful because of the physical inconveniences and uncongenial associations connected with it, there was a real demand for legal talent which could make itself at home in the backwoods. In addition to Waightstill Avery, who had moved from Charlotte to Morganton—the last town before crossing the mountains—Spruce McCay and Colonel John Stokes, of Salisbury, were among the few legal luminaries of western North Carolina during the decade immediately following the Revolution.²⁷

In 1783 or 1784 Andrew Jackson, a tall, slender,

²⁵ *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1791.

²⁶ "Governor Blount's Journal," *American Historical Magazine*, II, 242, 244.

²⁷ *S. R. N. C.*, XVIII, 2; XIX, 123; XX, 597; XXI, 200.

sandy-haired youth of about eighteen years—having suffered at the hands of the British during the recent conflict, having followed the races in Charleston, and having returned to his native Waxhaw settlements to teach school among his simple Scotch-Irish neighbors and kinsmen—now journeyed with ambitious foresight to seek instruction under the roof of the veteran Avery. Not finding accommodation here, he went to Salisbury and read law for two years with McCay, completing his studies under Colonel Stokes.²⁸ According to Parton, this young man, without financial backing of any kind, won the reputation in the frontier town of Salisbury of being a good fellow, somewhat given to “swank,” a practical joker, and a lover and owner of horses. No one seems to have been impressed by his seriousness as a student. He had as fellow-student and companion in Salisbury one John McNairy,²⁹ who was to prove himself a staunch friend for many years, and a bitter enemy for as many more.

In 1787 young Jackson was licensed to practise law in Surry County, North Carolina.³⁰ During the same year his name was attached to a petition of the transmontane people for separation from the parent state.³¹ Thus one of the very first records which we have of Andrew Jackson connects him with the State of Franklin, but the movement was practically dead when the young lawyer the following year removed his home across the mountains. Accompanied by his friend McNairy and others, he set out from Morganton and followed the Wilderness Trace to Jonesborough.³²

This migration is usually referred to as a real ad-

²⁸ Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 98-99, 101, 109-10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 104, 108, 109.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 114.

³¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 708.

³² Parton, I, 119.

venture. But in 1782 Spruce McCay had presided over the first court ever held by a judge in Washington County, and Waightsill Avery acted as attorney for the state on the same occasion.³³ These two men made frequent visits to the courts of the transmontane counties,³⁴ McCay having begun to practise in Washington County during the session of its first court in 1778; and Jackson's signature to the petition of 1787 is documentary evidence that he visited this country a year before he came to make it his home.

Early tradition had it that the young Jackson appeared at Jonesborough in the spring of 1788, riding one horse, leading another, and followed by a pack of fox hounds.³⁵ Court records show that he bought a negro girl shortly after his arrival.³⁶ During his stay of less than a year in that part of the country, he was admitted to practice in the local courts, rode his own horse in a race, and fought a bloodless duel with Avery.³⁷ It was not customary for frontiersmen to fight duels or for newly licensed young lawyers without financial backing to own race horses. Jackson's legal fees could hardly have supported his establishment and his pretensions. The only obvious conclusion is that he found racing profitable. It is possible that he indulged in other forms of gambling. It is certain that he loved cock-fighting, but Parton says that having won in Charleston a wager at dice which enabled him to ride home instead of walk, he never again put a stake on a throw.³⁸

Andrew Jackson from the beginning of his career set himself up to be a "gentleman." He was not to the

³³ *Ibid.*, I, 116; Ramsey, p. 274; Allison, *Dropped Stitches*, p. 5.

³⁴ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 224; Allison, pp. 110-18; Ramsey, p. 182.

³⁵ Allison, p. 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁷ Haywood, p. 194; Allison, pp. 102-7.

³⁸ Parton, I, 98.

manner born, but on the frontier a gentleman was a man who could play the part, and Jackson played the part convincingly. His bearing was always distinguished.³⁹ His vices and his principles were those of the gentlemen of his day. He was badly educated, but so also were the aristocratic George Washington and the even more aristocratic William Blount, neither of whom could write correctly. From the first he associated on terms of equality with the leading men of his community, and to the last he showed more daring and more courage than any man of his acquaintance could command. The familiar figure of the domineering old Chieftain of later years pales in interest when compared with this swagger sandy-haired youth who saw so clearly where his chances lay and strutted so confidently on his own through frontier society. Time is wont to take the image of a hero, chip away his vices and chisel in imaginary virtues; but all the remodeling and recoloring of Andrew Jackson has not created a character half so fascinating as he was in reality.

During the same year, three other young lawyers made their appearance in the Holston country and the four budding attorneys became not only associates but friends. John McNairy, the companion of Jackson's school days, David Allison, and Archibald Roane were the others. They were all licensed to practise in Washington County within the year,⁴⁰ and presently they all attracted the attention of Governor Blount, who was on the lookout for talented young men with a knowledge of law.

In 1787, before setting out for the West, McNairy

³⁹ *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 161-62.

⁴⁰ Haywood, p. 194.

had been elected judge of the superior court of Mero District.⁴¹ This indicates that he was not without influential friends back home. Jackson apparently set out for the West with him, intending to share his fortunes but without definite prospects. When Judge McNairy left the Holston country in the fall of 1788 and traveled over the newly opened road to Nashville, Jackson went with him. Hostile Indians made it necessary for a large company of immigrants to travel together under protection of a military escort. McNairy was of sufficient importance to be especially mentioned by the newspaper taking note of the departure of this cavalcade, but his companion was not noticed.⁴²

On the way through the wilderness while the party was encamped one night about its fires, hostile Indians encircled them, hooting like owls. Jackson was awakened and, arousing his companions, advised them to move on quietly and without delay. His advice was followed and the travelers were unharmed, whereas a party which followed them the same night was attacked and all but annihilated.⁴³ It was supposed to be the accomplishment of an experienced scout to distinguish between the hoot of an owl and its imitation by an Indian. That a green lawyer should so conduct himself in the wilderness was a bit remarkable.

On arriving in Nashville, Jackson found lodging with the widow of Colonel John Donelson,⁴⁴ who had lost his life three years before on the road from Kentucky. With Mrs. Donelson at the time was living her daughter, Rachel Robards, who as a girl of twelve had come out in the "Adventure" with her father, and who, as all the

⁴¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XX, 262.

⁴² *Ibid.*, I, 121-23.

⁴³ Parton, I, 121.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 123.

world knows, was to become the future Mrs. Andrew Jackson. In this home lived also a young lawyer by the name of John Overton, who became Jackson's lifelong friend.

There were but few attorneys in the struggling community, and the collection of debts was a difficult matter. Jackson soon found himself in active practice, and Judge McNairy, looking out for the welfare of his friend, appointed him attorney for the District.⁴⁵ The law had made no provision for filling this important office and consequently there was no salary attached to the post, but sometimes legislatures retroactively rewarded such services. This case was reported to the North Carolina assembly in 1789 and the young attorney was granted a regular appointment,⁴⁶ but his salary was never paid by the state.

Within three months of his arrival in Nashville, Jackson wrote a notable letter. The Spanish conspiracy was in progress. Dr. White was in New Orleans negotiating with Miró. James Robertson and Daniel Smith (Anthony Bledsoe had been killed by Indians the year before) were in correspondence with the Spanish governor for whom they had recently named their district. Just at this time a young relative of Miró, by the name of Fagot, arrived at Nashville for the purpose of trade and probably for other more important business. Jackson met him and wrote a letter to Smith recommending the young foreigner to his favorable attention as an individual likely to be useful because of his connections.⁴⁷

How it came about that a rank outsider who had

⁴⁵ *S. R. N. C.*, XXI, 637; *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 294-95.

⁴⁶ *S. R. N. C.*, XXI, 412, 714, 717.

⁴⁷ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 216.

barely had time to get acquainted should suddenly inject himself into the secret councils of high politics remains a mystery. Was it that the Spanish conspiracy was a matter of common knowledge in the Cumberland country? Was Jackson on the inside track before migrating to the Mero District? Or was it merely that an enterprising young man had made a chance acquaintance and insinuated himself into the confidence of strangers? There is no reason to believe that Jackson was acquainted with Blount before 1790 or 1791, but he may have made friends with Robertson and Smith on his arrival in their neighborhood. Whatever may have been the truth of the matter, this letter of 1789 is a portent for him who can read signs. Fagot became Smith's agent in the conspiracy.

When Blount first arrived in the Territory, Jackson received no appointment in spite of the fact that he had been attorney-general of Mero District under North Carolina. In 1791, however, the governor conferred upon him the same position under the new régime,⁴⁸ and, in addition, made him judge-advocate of the Davidson County regiment.⁴⁹ Singularly enough, this was the only military appointment which Jackson, the mighty warrior, ever held until he became major general of militia. Within the same year Blount wrote to Robertson praising the activity and energy of the young attorney-general⁵⁰ and he presently expressed a desire to promote him in the military scale.⁵¹ Young Jackson of the steel-and-fire character, who had come so confidently wooing fortune in the wilderness, had attracted

⁴⁸ "Journal of Governor Blount," *American Historical Magazine*, II, 234.

⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 247. "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 193-94, 282.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, II, 84; Putnam, pp. 351, 398.

favorable notice of the All-Powerful. He was on the highroad to success.

Jackson was not the only lawyer who received preferment at the hands of the governor. Blount occasionally wrote to Robertson and instructed him to show the letter to McNairy.⁵² The youthful judge, therefore, must have been on confidential terms with the executive. It is not unlikely that his western appointment came through Blount's influence. David Allison also was taken into the confidence of the governor. Previously he had held several minor offices under the government of North Carolina. In 1790 he removed from the Holston to the Cumberland settlements,⁵³ and was appointed clerk of the superior court for Mero District.⁵⁴ By 1792 he had become Blount's personal agent for carrying on his business, both political and private, with Philadelphia, spending much of his time on the road between Knoxville and the Quaker City.⁵⁵ For such services, he was appointed deputy paymaster of the military forces in the Territory.⁵⁶ Archibald Roane also came in for a share of honors and emoluments. He was appointed attorney-general for the District of Washington.⁵⁷ The relations between the governor and these four rising young lawyers form a central link in the early politics of Tennessee.

Blount's political position was by no means an easy one, but he was a man of consummate tact and, in spite of the most trying circumstances which he had to face,

⁵² "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, II, 66. In 1794 McNairy paid taxes on seven slaves and over ten thousand acres of land.—Putnam, p. 660.

⁵³ Allison, *Dropped Stitches*, p. 6.

⁵⁴ "Blount's Journal," *loc. cit.*, II, 234.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 240-41; "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 283-84, 390-92.

⁵⁶ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 33; *Knoxville Gazette*, Oct. 12, 1793.

⁵⁷ *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 322-23; Allison, p. 3.

no opposition made headway against him during his term of office. The stalwart Robertson was always in control of the situation in the Cumberland country, and he was a loyal and steadfast supporter of the governor as well as his agent for his landed interests in that section.⁵⁸ He was appointed temporary agent to the Chickasaws⁵⁹ in addition to his position as brigadier general, and the unfailing friendship of that nation was due largely to his wise management. Keeping the savages in hand was no great feat for the canny old pioneer; the tasks which almost floored him were those of writing reports, keeping accounts, and curtailing expenses. The natives were docile but importunate friends and their chiefs and warriors rarely could be sent away without gifts. They also had a fondness for travel at the government's expense.⁶⁰

Even the turbulent Sevier apparently followed Blount for a time without question, and the diplomatic governor succeeded in conciliating Sevier's old enemy, John Tipton.⁶¹ Blount had strict orders to prevent all offensive operations against the Indians, and it was this phase of his duty which gave him most serious difficulty. The frontiersmen could not understand why the government refused to protect them when the Indians made raids upon their settlements and attacked their stations. The Creeks under McGillivray were almost uniformly hostile in spite of the treaty they had made at New York in 1790,

⁵⁸ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, I, 392-93; III, 282-87; Draper Papers Tennessee MSS., IV, 42/10.

⁵⁹ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, II, 59-61, 79-80.

⁶⁰ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 275; Putnam, pp. 508, 509. On February 13, 1793, the Chickasaw chiefs wrote to Robertson, "You make whiskey, send us some; it is good to take a little at war talks."—Putnam, p. 137.

⁶¹ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 27; *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 223.

and a group of renegade Cherokees and others who lived in the towns of Nickajack and Running Water, high in the Cumberland Mountains where the Tennessee cuts through them, made life miserable for the Cumberland settlers and for those who passed in boats down the stream. Often the natives had some provocation for their attacks on the Holston settlements, but the losses of the whites in men and horses were truly appalling.⁶² Congress, intent on the negotiations with Spain, seemed utterly oblivious to their sufferings.

It was difficult for Blount to reconcile the people to this situation, but Sevier used his influence to keep the peace—a new rôle for the truculent gentleman. The peace policy was aided also by the establishment in 1791 of a weekly newspaper, the *Knoxville Gazette*. Its editor, George Roulstone, was an administration man and busied himself with dissemination of the proper information.⁶³ Several times the governor had to halt incipient expeditions and some feeling was aroused against him because of this,⁶⁴ but Robertson, Sevier, and Roulstone kept the people in hand.⁶⁵ William Cocke endeavored to arouse them on the subject, but his efforts led to nothing overt.⁶⁶ War was averted and opposition hushed.

⁶² An unsuccessful attack on Buchanan's Station near Nashville, and the massacre of the garrison at Cave's Station near Knoxville featured the Indian depredations of this period. *Knoxville Gazette* of October 11, 1794, has list of losses since February 26, 1794, which gives seventy-one killed, twelve wounded, and sixteen captured.

⁶³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 32; *Knoxville Gazette*, January 12, 1793; *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 222.

⁶⁴ Sometimes such expeditions were carried out in spite of all he could do. *Knoxville Gazette*, Aug. 27, Aug. 13, June 15, March 23, Feb. 9, 1793; Nov. 15, 1794; "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, III, 365.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 68-69; *Knoxville Gazette*, July 29, 1793.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, Oct. 20, Dec. 29, 1792. Cocke's enemies, in order to serve their purposes, wrote, or caused to be written, scurrilous screeds for the public prints,

There was one occasion, however, when matters came to a serious pass. The unprovoked outrages committed by the Chickamauga Indians, as those living at Nickajack and Running Water were called, finally aroused such hot resentment on the part of the Cumberland settlers that their fury could no longer be restrained. Robertson came to the conclusion that an attack on their towns was the only way in which Indian depredations could be ended. Finally, in 1794, he broke discipline and ordered an expedition against them. The Indian towns were destroyed and the settlements relieved for the time being.⁶⁷ As a consequence of his unauthorized expedition, Robertson found it necessary to go through the form of resigning his military commission, but no successor was appointed and he continued to serve.⁶⁸ The friendly relations which had existed between him and Blount for years were not interrupted.⁶⁹

The crisis of the Indian troubles was reached the following year. Rumors of war between the Chickasaws and Creeks having been brought to the attention of the Federal government, it ordered six howitzers sent to the former nation;⁷⁰ and the Spanish authorities now erected a fort on their land at the Chickasaw Bluffs.⁷¹ The hope of peace on the border was growing fainter each day. Spain, however, was having her troubles on the

signing them with the bombastic name of an Indian chief. This was quite in accord with the best manner of frontier writers. Roosevelt, in his *Winning of the West*, makes the ludicrous mistake of assuming that an Indian chief actually wrote the communications, and cites the above as an illustration of the Indians' interest in frontier politics!—*Winning of the West*, pt. VI, 18.

⁶⁷ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, III, 357-58, 358, 359, 367-72; *Knoxville Gazette*, Sept. 26, 1794.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 363.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, III: 263; IV, 258-59.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 295-96; II, 362-63, III, 358-59, 376-77.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, III, 379-80, 390-92; Putnam, pp. 512-13; *Knoxville Gazette*, July 3, 1795.

Continent with the victorious armies of Republican France. She could not hope to cope successfully with two enemies at the same time, and decided to come to terms with her American neighbor. The treaty which effected this was negotiated by Thomas Pinckney, and provided that the southern boundary of the United States should be drawn along the thirty-first parallel, as the United States had contended, and that the Mississippi should be opened to navigation. As a result of this adjustment, an unwonted calm settled over the Southwest. The southern Indians had been deeply impressed with the recent defeat of their northern brethren by the army under General Anthony Wayne. The Pinckney treaty removed the Spanish posts from their vantage points within the Creek country, and the natives were left without adequate means for carrying on their accustomed hostilities against the whites. It is true they could still go down to Pensacola and Mobile for supplies, but these points were not easy of access and the Indians were lazy.⁷²

By these means the cloud which had hung so long over the frontier was lifted, and the Southwest now enjoyed its first era of prosperity. The wilderness roads were choked with prospective settlers, hurrying out to take advantage of the boom in the land business.⁷³ William Terrell Lewis and Griffith Rutherford had migrated to the Cumberland a little earlier, and now they were followed by other men of property and influence.

It was natural that the people of the Southwest Territory should not long be content with their status in

⁷² "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, III, 367-72, 387-89; Roosevelt, III, pt. I, 307-9.

⁷³ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 42-12; II, 48; Knoxville *Gazette*, Dec. 13, 1794; "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, IV, 174-75.

the Union. In fact, the first phase of territorial government was a denial of home rule, and this is always unpopular with men accustomed to representative institutions.⁷⁴ It required all the tact and influence of Blount to make the situation in the least palatable to them even for a time.

When the census was taken in 1791, it revealed that the population was sufficient to warrant establishment of a territorial legislature under the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance, which had been applied with slight modification to the government of the Southwest Territory. The authority for forming such a body lay with the governor whenever the conditions could be fulfilled. Blount did not wish a legislature.⁷⁵ He succeeded in delaying its organization until 1794. Pending the establishment of representative government, he and the three territorial judges had control, under Congress, of legislation and taxation. From the point of view of the governor, this situation could not be improved. As popular pressure increased, however, Blount, who always kept his hand on the public pulse, realized in 1793 that it was time to give way. The election of a house of representatives was ordered⁷⁶ and, when it assembled on February 26, 1794, it nominated ten men from whom the President chose five to serve as the legislative council. The five selected were John Sevier, James Winchester, Griffith Rutherford, Stockley Donelson, and Permenas Taylor. Rutherford⁷⁷ was chosen

⁷⁴ *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1791; Putnam, p. 380.

⁷⁵ Goodpasture, "William Blount" *loc. cit.*, p. 9; Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 35; *Ibid.*, Virginia MSS., VII, 38.

⁷⁶ "Blount's Journal," *loc. cit.*, II, 257-59; *Knoxville Gazette*, Nov. 23, 1793.

⁷⁷ Goodpasture, "William Blount," *loc. cit.*, p. 9; "Blount's Journal," *loc. cit.*, II, 259-61, 266; *Knoxville Gazette*, July 31, Sept. 6, 1794.

president of this body, and Dr. James White was sent to Congress as the territorial delegate.⁷⁸ These men, with the exception of Taylor, had long been powerful in frontier affairs. If the Southwest had been combed, no other five with an equal interest in exploiting the land could have been found.⁷⁹

They lost no time in looking after their interests. At the first regular meeting of the new assembly on August 25, 1794, the council, adopting the North Carolina principle of taxation, wished to levy an assessment of 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents on each hundred acres of land and a like amount on each free poll, while the house insisted on a levy of 25 cents instead of 12 $\frac{1}{2}$. After considerable discussion, the council gave way and the house bill was passed.⁸⁰ Blount's land-jobbing friends were shocked at the result, and he himself expressed dissatisfaction with the measure.⁸¹ Though the men on the inside failed to win a complete victory in this instance, they usually succeeded in their aims.

It would be hard to find a better illustration than this territorial organization of the way in which the wealthy rose to the top of affairs even on the frontier,⁸² and combined through their influence and common interests to control economic legislation. From time to time they found it necessary to make some obvious concession to

⁷⁸ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, III, 272-73, 288-91; *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 13, 1794.

⁷⁹ Blount had written to Robertson that he intended to make it a point not to meddle in the nominations.—*American Historical Magazine*, III, 282-83.

⁸⁰ Goodspeed Publishing Company (pub.), *History of Tennessee*, p. 208.

⁸¹ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, III, 359.

⁸² A communication signed "A Friend of the People," which appeared in the *Knoxville Gazette*, January 16, 1794, said: "Thus far for our election, which I hope will plainly discover the manner in which it was conducted, and likewise arouse the ardor and ambition of the citizens of Jefferson [County] to be more watchful and tenacious of their rights hereafter."

democracy, such as broadening the suffrage or lowering the qualifications for office. But, while throwing out such sops with one hand, they managed to keep well in the other the more obscure field of economic legislation. The ironic spectacle of the powerful, in order to get more power, bartering to the masses those privileges which should be theirs by right, is no new thing in the Republic.

This second phase of territorial government was hardly a logical stopping place for the restless pioneers. The coming of peace and the influx of population in 1795 spurred them on to further activity. In their desire for statehood they were led by Governor Blount,⁸³ who had suddenly become convinced of the wisdom of this policy.⁸⁴ He doubtless reasoned that a territorial legislature had all the disadvantages and few of the advantages of a similar body under a state constitution. He believed himself able to control the political situation as well under the one form of government as the other,⁸⁵ and the greater dignity which would result from membership in the Union naturally appealed to local pride.

Having made up his mind on the question, Blount called the second session of the territorial legislature to meet in June instead of October, as had been previously provided.⁸⁶ When convened, this body ordered the taking of a census and a vote on the question of statehood. In case the requisite sixty thousand free inhabitants should be discovered and the people should so decree, the governor was to order the election of a constitutional convention.⁸⁷ The returns showed a larger population

⁸³ "Robertson Correspondence," IV., 249-50; *Knoxville Gazette*, July 17, 1795.

⁸⁴ "Blount's Journal," *loc. cit.*, II, 273; "Robertson Correspondence," III, 374-75.

⁸⁵ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, IV, 74-75, 77-78, 363.

⁸⁶ *Knoxville Gazette*, May 8, 1795.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, July 31, 1795.

than was required and revealed a majority in favor of statehood.⁸⁸ He accordingly arranged for the election of the convention by manhood suffrage.⁸⁹ This body met in Knoxville on January 11, 1796. Blount, as could have been predicted, was chosen president. Andrew Jackson and John McNairy were appointed to represent Davidson County on the drafting committee.⁹⁰ It was a far cry back to the day when together these two enterprising striplings had come out to the wilderness seeking fortune.

The frame of government here produced was based on that of North Carolina, but there were some interesting modifications. Representation was to be apportioned according to taxable population instead of by territorial units;⁹¹ the governor was to be elected by the people instead of by the assembly;⁹² and the property qualification for voters was abolished in case a residence qualification could be met.⁹³ These features represent an advance in democracy, but, as usual, the advance was more apparent than real. Although North Carolina had, since 1784, been accustomed to tax all acreage at the same rate regardless of value, there was no provision to this effect in her constitution. Such a principle was embodied in the instrument for Tennessee.⁹⁴ It was provided also that the justices of the peace should be elected for life by the assembly, and that they in turn should choose most of the other county officials.⁹⁵

When the first draft of the proposed constitution came from the hands of the drafting committee, the provision

⁸⁸ Goodspeed, *op. cit.*, p. 211. According to the returns, East Tennessee favored statehood while West Tennessee opposed it.—Ramsey, p. 648.

⁸⁹ *American State Papers, Miscellaneous*, I, 146.

⁹⁰ Goodspeed, p. 213.

⁹¹ Art. I, sec. 2.

⁹² Art. II, sec. 2.

⁹³ Art. III, sec. 1.

⁹⁴ Art. I, sec. 26.

⁹⁵ Art. V, sec. 12; Art. VI, sec. 1.

of the North Carolina instrument requiring office-holders to believe in God, a future state of rewards and punishments, and the divine authority of the Old and New Testaments, was omitted.⁹⁶ A motion was made from the floor to restore this provision and the proposal was accepted.⁹⁷ The liberals were able to do no more than secure the elision of the last clause of this Presbyterian profession of faith.⁹⁸ Andrew Jackson took a leading part in fighting this stand of the dogmatists, and on his side were most of the prominent men of the convention.⁹⁹ The spirit of the French Revolution was struggling on the frontier with the spirit of John Calvin, and the future leader of American Democracy here made his débüt as a liberal.

North Carolina had ceded her western territory under an agreement that it was to become a separate state. In taking the census and calling the convention, Blount had assumed that in case the required population were found to exist, the people of the Territory had the right to acquire statehood without previously consulting Congress on the subject.¹⁰⁰ In 1795 James Winchester had written to Blount from Philadelphia that Congress would hardly make any move toward admission until the Territory itself had taken the initiative.¹⁰¹ So firm and general was the conviction on this point that the convention also acted under the theory that statehood would be assumed without previous recognition by Congress.¹⁰² This was, in effect, the same procedure followed in the creation of the State of Franklin.

⁹⁶ Goodspeed, pp. 217-18.

⁹⁷ *Journal of the Convention*, 1796, p. 23.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Ramsey, pp. 649-50.

¹⁰¹ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 177-78.

¹⁰² *Journal of the Convention*, 1796, p. 23.

Joseph McMinn, a friend of Blount, was selected,¹⁰³ just as William Cocke had been chosen by the Franklin convention, to present the constitution to Congress and ask for admission. Washington, in a message acknowledging the prescriptive right of the Territory to statehood, recommended admission.¹⁰⁴ The House committee reported favorably,¹⁰⁵ but the Senate committee, through Rufus King, reported unfavorably on the message, urging that the state should be laid out and the census taken under congressional authority before admission could be considered.¹⁰⁶ The high Federalists, taking their usual stand, were attempting to obstruct the development of the West.

Without waiting for congressional authority or submitting their work to the ratification of the people, the convention had ordered elections to be held under the new instrument. The choice for governor fell upon John Sevier, of the checkered career, and the assembly convened at Knoxville on March 28, 1796. This body proceeded forthright to elect Blount and Cocke to the Federal Senate, to choose presidential electors, and to provide for the election of two representatives in Congress.¹⁰⁷ On June 1, 1796, Congress made provision for admission, but it allowed Tennessee only one representative instead of the two which had been expected.¹⁰⁸ Without raising any general question as to the validity of the acts of the convention or the session of the assembly already held under the new constitution, Congress

¹⁰³ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 279-80.

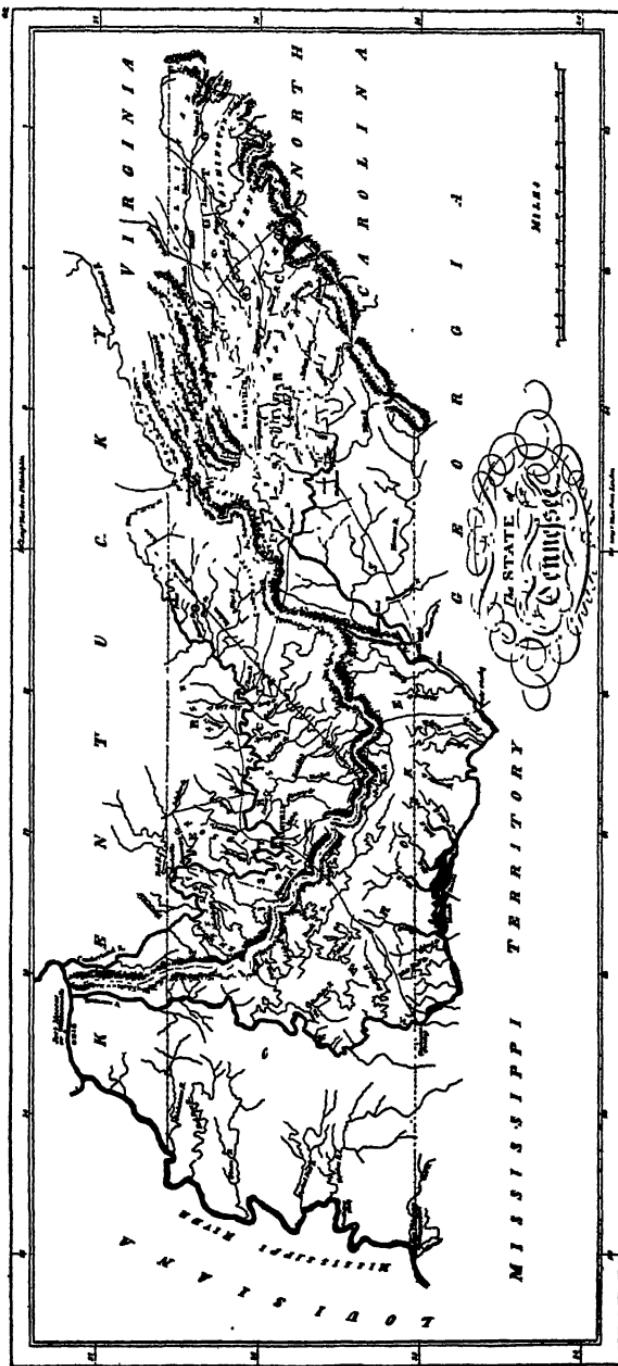
¹⁰⁴ *American State Papers, Miscellaneous*, I, 147.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 147-48.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 150.

¹⁰⁷ N. Cross, "The Admission of Tennessee into the Union," *American Historical Magazine*, V, 241-47; Goodspeed, p. 219; Ramsey, pp. 669-72.

¹⁰⁸ Goodspeed, pp. 218-19.



From Cary's General Atlas, 1818

nevertheless held that the election of the Federal representatives was not valid until it had been definitely authorized by Federal power.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, it became necessary for Sevier to call a special session of the assembly to remedy the matter. "Citizens" Blount and Cocke were again chosen senators; three men from each county were nominated and authorized to choose the three presidential electors for the state; and provision was made for the election of the one Federal representative.¹¹⁰ Andrew Jackson was presently selected by the people to fill this post. The fortunes of the swagger young lawyer were still on the up-grade.

It must not be supposed that Blount, by his skillful management, had been able to erase all animosities which had been aroused by the conflict over the State of Franklin. While he had favored the former Franklinites, who constituted a large majority of the leading men in the eastern settlements, he had been able to conciliate Tipton of the opposition; but Cocke, in spite of his appointment as attorney-general for Washington District,¹¹¹ remained unfriendly. This is shown by his opposition to the peace policy which Blount had so unflaggingly pursued. Cocke had run against Dr. White for the position of territorial delegate to Congress, and White's victory by a vote of eleven to seven doubtless indicates the margin of Blount's control.¹¹² Blount had urged Robertson and Smith to offer as delegates to the convention in 1796 in order that their enemies might be kept in check and punished when the new government should be inaugurated,¹¹³ but the election of Cocke to

¹⁰⁹ *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 219-20.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII, 219; Moore and Foster, *Tennessee, the Volunteer State*, I, 272.

¹¹¹ "Blount's Journal," *loc. cit.*, II, 234. ¹¹² *Knoxville Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1794.

¹¹³ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 74-75, 363.

the Senate along with Blount indicates that compromise was still necessary. Cocke's position during this period would seem to be due to his connection with the Virginia speculators of the Campbell group whose interests had been opposed to those of Blount and his group since the beginning of the Franklin movement.

Yet this was not the only friction in the machine. Though Blount and Sevier had apparently worked in great harmony during the territorial period, Sevier seethed in silent revolt on account of his incapacity to accept gracefully a subordinate position. He was used to leading, not following. He had a stronger hold on the affections of the people than had the governor, and he knew it. Was he not "Nolachucky Jack" upon whom the highlight of heroic adventure played? Had he not come out with the pioneers to the wilderness primeval, saved them from the tomahawk of the Indian, and shared their life and hardships? He had a commanding personality and a happy faculty of ingratiating himself into the confidence of the pioneer, who, with schoolboy romanticism, endowed him with all the glamor and high courage of a hero. The natural exclusiveness of the gently born Blount was repelling to the typical pioneer. While he also had taken a conspicuous part in the pageant of the wilderness, that part had been standing off-stage, looking on and manipulating wires to which other men danced like puppets. If, therefore, the matter were left to the settlers themselves to decide, there was no question as to which of the two they would elevate to the highest office. Sevier sensed this situation. His relations with the executive were not so cordial as were those of Robertson, and they apparently tended to become less so as time went on. This situation is surpris-

ingly illuminated by a letter which Valentine Sevier wrote to his father from Cumberland just after the latter was elected governor of the new state. The son informed the elder Sevier that he had been strenuously opposed by James Robertson and the two Lewises—William Terrell and Joel.¹¹⁴ It seems clear that a rift was developing under the surface between the old governor and the new.

The infant state of Tennessee, under the undemocratic method of choosing electors which she had adopted, cast her first vote for Thomas Jefferson. This is what might, on the surface, have been expected, but the case is not so simple. William Blount had been a Federalist all along, and so also had been his principal supporters under the territorial régime.¹¹⁵ No better proof of Federalism could be desired than the way in which Blount strained every nerve and his own popularity in the effort to keep peace with the Indians in order that authorities at Philadelphia might be uninterrupted in their Spanish negotiations. Not only this, but Blount favored the English in their war against the French Republic, and was intensely hostile in his attitude toward Genêt.¹¹⁶ On June 4, 1793, toasts were drunk in Jonesborough condemning "the murderers of Louis XVI."¹¹⁷

This is not what one would expect on the frontier, and it was not the brand of sentiment to which the West usually gave birth. A communication appeared in the Knoxville *Gazette* censuring the Jonesborough toasts,¹¹⁸ and the toasts drunk the next year and in 1795 at similar

¹¹⁴ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 123.

¹¹⁵ Knoxville *Gazette*, Nov. 1, 1794; *Steele Papers*, I, 27-30.

¹¹⁶ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, III, 278-81; II, 371-73; Roosevelt, III, pt. 2, 11-12.

¹¹⁷ Knoxville *Gazette*, July 13, 1793.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1793.

celebrations in Abingdon are sufficient to develop the other side of the picture. These condemned aristocracy in a vehement manner, and were loud in praise of the French Republic and the "Democratic party."¹¹⁹ A Knoxville celebration of the latter date brought forth pledges favoring the French Republic and condemning the Whiskey Rebellion of Pennsylvania.¹²⁰ Public opinion was on this side and contrary expressions became less and less frequent.¹²¹ In fact, the apparent willingness of Congress to sacrifice the Southwest for the sake of other interests went far toward cooling the Federalism of the governor himself.¹²² When Timothy Pickering wrote to him on March 23, 1795, and stated, "Upon the whole, Sir, I cannot refrain from saying that the complexion of some of the Transactions in the Southwest territory appears unfavorable to the public interest,"¹²³ his enthusiasm for the party to which that gentleman belonged probably died a natural death. If this were not enough, the Federalist opposition to the admission of Tennessee as a state filled the cup,¹²⁴ and the governor came out against Jay's treaty and for Jefferson, and with him were Jackson and Robertson. It is not beyond the bounds of probability that the vote of the new commonwealth might have been cast for John Adams had his party pursued a different policy in dealing with the southern frontier.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, July 31, 1794, July 17, 1795. One of those of the latter year demanded the total abolition of slavery.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1795.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1794.

¹²² *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 47-48; Roosevelt, III, pt. 1, 238-40.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, IV, 182.

¹²⁴ Goodpasture, "William Blount," *loc. cit.*, pp. 10-11; Roosevelt, III, pt. 2, 27; III, pt. 1, 306-9; "Robertson Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 346-48.

CHAPTER IX

THE FRONTIERSMEN

MUCH has been said of the social status of the Englishmen who colonized America. It is true that few titled aristocrats ever settled on our shores, but it is also true that there came across a sufficient number of men of gentle birth and breeding to establish in the southern colonies practically the same social standards which prevailed in England. This could not have been done by peasants or artisans. The empire builders of Britain, from that day to this, have been of the upper middle class and the gentry, and it was their standards of living which were established in Virginia and the Carolinas.

The society of colonial North Carolina was aristocratic. Its leaders, whether merchants, lawyers, government officials, or planters, spoke good English and read the philosophical literature of the eighteenth century. They dressed in Continental style, cultivated the social graces, and enjoyed life. They looked down upon such as were not able to live as they lived, and the lower orders could do nothing but accept their inferior position or move to the frontier.

Yet colonial North Carolina did not furnish a replica of English society minus the nobility and the peasantry. Living conditions were too primitive to permit of that, and the economic situation was too different. James Iredell, a gentleman in every sense of the word, complained in 1772 that the men in America were not as careful as he thought they should be to show those

little courtesies to the ladies which they so much appreciated.¹ Nor could the lower classes be expected to accept their position with the erstwhile meekness when land was cheap and the frontier was open. Thus the upper classes tended to come down a bit, and the lower classes tended to rise.

Such has been the inclination in America to scoff at social pretensions, and such has been our custom to tolerate—even to court—that which we pretend to scorn, that it is hard to think straight upon this subject. Because men can rise in the world, it is assumed that they do, and we are prone to suppose that there has been a constant interchange between the different economic strata. The result of such misconception is that the static element in our life has been underestimated. In Yorkshire and Wessex in the eighteenth century one heard such expressions as “measly,” “dang” for damn, “wrassle” for wrestle, “afore” for before, “argufying,” “by gum,” “he’d lief,” “pisin yer innerds,” “chaw” for chew, “agen” for against, “chillun” for children, “chaney” for china, “sweet on him,” “this-a-way,” “obleeged” for obliged, “unconsarned” for unconcerned, “sperret” for spirit, “nater” for nature, “jist” for just, and “yaller” for yellow. The writer has heard every one of these expressions, not in the southern mountains, but in the southern lowlands. There is a certain permanence in language, and there is a certain permanence in the social groups which speak it.

The poor of England furnished the poor of the colonial South, and, to a considerable extent, the poor of the present South. It is often assumed that our western frontier was opened up by men from this class, but there

¹ McRee, *Iredell*, I, 133.

is only a modicum of truth in this assumption. Though, from generation to generation, a few of these might rise to prominence, there was not enough initiative in the blood to leaven the mass, and from generation to generation they have drifted. They did not discover America, but they drifted here in order to escape hard conditions at home. They did not discover the frontier, but they drifted thither after others had blazed the way. Arriving late, they took up the poorer acreage either in highlands or lowlands, and continued to live much as they had lived before. No thought of rising in the world ever occurred to them. They were seeking listless ease rather than fortune.

The real frontiersmen were, predominantly, the Scotch-Irish and Germans who came down the valley of Virginia from Pennsylvania. These were men of a different stamp. The Germans were thrifty farmers and mechanics. They were home-builders and loved comfort and were willing to work hard to acquire it. The Scotch-Irish were adventurers and politicians; they blazed trails, fought Indians, established governments, and speculated in lands. They loved excitement more than they loved hard work, and they hoped to live by their wits.

The frontier developed its own society which, in many ways, was peculiar to itself. It was affected by the geographical conditions under which it came into existence, by contact with the Indians both as enemies and friends, and by the older society of the seaboard with which a limited intercourse was maintained.

The home of the prosperous pioneer was a typical institution. It was built of hewn logs, fitted together after the fashion of the usual log cabin. On the ground floor two rooms faced the front with a wide enclosed

hallway between. The plan of the second floor was the same as that of the first, and a porch of medium width spanned the front of the house. This porch might be either one or two stories high, and was usually covered with a slanting roof. A single-gabled roof crowned the main structure, and the handsplit shingles were fastened in place with wooden pegs. There was a stone chimney at each end of the house, and no windows pierced the walls at these ends, all openings being to the front and rear. A kitchen was usually appended as an ell to the rear, and as the family grew the house grew, other rooms being similarly added. Plain planking was used for floors and woodwork, and as the conveniences of civilization increased, framework and planking or weatherboard might be substituted for the log construction, but the plan remained the same.² The tide-water aristocrat or the western nabob might build a mansion on Georgian principles with great columns and spacious verandahs, but the pioneer had his own type of architecture. It grew naturally from the one-room log cabin, could be expanded to suit his needs, and was in accord with his simple, substantial taste. In traveling through Tennessee and Kentucky, or even Alabama and southern Indiana, at the present time, one finds colonnaded edifices of the "colonial" type in the neighborhood of cities, but ancient country homes on the primitive model are scattered widely throughout the old agricultural districts.

Of course, the great majority of frontiersmen lived in cabins of only one room. These were often built of logs in the round, the chinks between being daubed with

² For description of such an early frontier home of the better class, see "Journal of John Sevier," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V, 167.

clay. In some cases the earth served as the floor, but in others, puncheons, or logs cloven in two with the flat side up, were used. All the furnishings were home-made, and a large family would commonly cook, eat, and sleep in the one room. If strangers were to occupy these quarters along with the family, the guests themselves were the only ones likely to suffer embarrassment because of the situation.

In dress more than in any other matter the frontiersmen were indebted to the Indian. In fact, except for the coonskin cap with tail attached which was worn by the former, there was no essential difference between the costumes of the pioneer and the native. The moccasins were cut from a single piece of deer or buffalo skin, the leggings, lacing well up the thigh, were of similar material, and the long, fringed hunting shirt was also of leather. A textile breechcloth was worn about the loins in Indian fashion, and if there were an undershirt, it was likely to be of soft deerskin. Of course, textiles were used in place of leather for underclothing and shirts as civilization advanced, but the convenient frontier costume was not essentially changed among the woodsmen and farmers until after the dawn of the nineteenth century, and the western militia clung to its ancient dress until the Jackson era was well advanced.³

While all this is true, the leaders of frontier society were not slow to put on the knee breeches and cocked hats of the colonial period. Luxuries of dress were purchased by the Holston pioneers as early as 1773,⁴ and Casper Mansker donned "a neat fitting suit of regi-

³ Ramsey, p. 246; Putnam, pp. 143-44.

⁴ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 7-9; Accounts of Evan Shelby, 1773 and 1774.

mentals" when elected lieutenant colonel of militia in the Cumberland settlements a few years after this date.⁵ Governor Blount certainly did not deck himself out in frontier costume, and the portraits of John Sevier always show him in European garb, though he wore the Indian regalia when on the march.⁶ It is stated by Ramsey that "a stranger, from the old States, chose to doff his ruffles, his broadcloth and his queue, rather than endure the scoff and ridicule of the backwoodsmen."⁷ In the back country there was always likely to exist some such feeling as this, but in the period immediately following the Revolution, class consciousness had not been stirred as it was deliberately stirred by the politicians of the Jackson period, and many writers have read the spirit of the later time into the earlier era.⁸ Blount's effective and quiet leadership as governor of the Southwest Territory and his later political influence in Tennessee would argue that no strong and universal antagonism existed at that time between the rich and the poor. In fact, political office was rarely sought even on the frontier by any but the natural leaders of society, and they secured the suffrage of their neighbors by reason of their prestige, without resorting to electioneering methods.⁹

The food of the early pioneers came largely from the

⁵ Putnam, p. 188.

⁶ A. C. Holt, "The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, VIII, 56. A communication in the *Knoxville Gazette*, April 20, 1793, states: "We do some times wear coats of imported cloth. Many have not the power of manufacture; the subjects thereof are wanting."

⁷ Ramsey, p. 715.

⁸ Haywood, p. 51: "In the wilderness beyond the mountains they [the immigrants] were promised at least exempt on from the supercilious annoyance of those who claimed a preëminence above them."

⁹ J. W. M. Breazeale, *Life as it is, or Matters and Things in General*, p. 14.

forest. Elk and buffalo disappeared early from the Tennessee country, but deer and bear meat supplemented beef and pork at least as late as 1800. Such meat cost from four to ten cents a pound, with venison and pork preferred above beef and bear.¹⁰ In addition to these quadrupeds, wild turkey was plentiful, and occasionally a swan was killed for food.¹¹ Squirrel and such small game were to be had if desired, and wolves, panthers, and foxes roamed the woods. The crow and the European grey rat did not reach the Tennessee country before 1800,¹² but red-billed parrakeets were to be found there in numbers.¹³ It was a region teeming with life before the white man wrought his devastation.

The cattle which the settlers brought to the West were turned loose to forage, summer and winter, on the cane which grew densely in the low country from Kentucky to the Gulf. The cane-brakes were mentioned by nearly every writer who visited the old Southwest, but they have almost disappeared from the face of the country, along with the swans and the parrakeets, having been stamped out by the grazing of the cattle and the rooting of the hogs.

In agriculture, corn was the staple crop. Though the supply might be inadequate for local needs for the first few years in a new settlement, it soon came to be the chief article of diet. Before mills were established, the grain might be parched whole and eaten, or it might be pounded in a mortar and made into mush or bread. As settlement advanced, the water mill and the whiskey

¹⁰ Putnam, pp. 252, 278-79.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹² F. A. Michaux, "Travels in Kentucky and Tennessee," R. G. Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels*, III, 276-77.

¹³ A. V. & W. H. Goodpasture, *Life of Jefferson Dillard Goodpasture*, pp. 27-28; S. C. Williams (ed.), *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country*, p. 505.

still made their appearance, and corn meal and corn whiskey constituted two of the principal products of the frontier.

Wheat was grown in East Tennessee at an early date, but the lack of good flouring mills discouraged its use, and though it came to be an article of export from the region, it never attained the importance of corn on the southern frontier. Cotton was raised in 1780 as a part of the first crop produced in the Cumberland settlement, and it was soon widely cultivated, but in the early period the fiber was intended solely for domestic consumption. It was not until after 1800 that it came to be an article of export to any considerable extent. The same is true of the culture of tobacco.¹⁴

One finds little in contemporary writings about vegetable gardens upon the frontier; but the Indians grew beans, potatoes, squash, pumpkins, and cabbage, and the whites must have had an even larger variety, though they evidently were not, as a rule, industrious providers. Apples and peaches were the most commonly cultivated fruits among both the Indians and the whites,¹⁵ while grapes and plums grew wild in abundance. The sugar maple furnished the frontiersmen with one of his few luxuries of diet, and the forest also supplied him with numerous medicinal herbs.

Except for the domestic manufacture of textiles, the frontiersmen were usually deficient as craftsmen. The Germans, however, constitute an exception to this rule. They frequently supplied themselves and their neighbors with pottery, cutlery, and other manufactured articles. The Scotch-Irish did not often turn to such pursuits.

¹⁴ Report of Steiner and Schweinitz, Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 516-17.

¹⁵ S. C. Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, p. 249.

Aside from grist mills, tanneries were ordinarily the first "manufacturing" enterprises established on the frontier. Neither Knoxville nor Nashville had any other such industries before 1800.¹⁶ Furnaces and forges for the manufacture of iron were, however, established at different places in Tennessee before this date,¹⁷ and lime was produced on a small scale. Salt was not produced on a commercial scale in Tennessee; the country was largely supplied from extensive works in the neighborhood of Abingdon, Virginia.¹⁸

Though the western demand for salt was largely, and that for iron partly, supplied from western sources, most manufactured articles had to be brought from a greater distance. Among these, imported liquors and imported fabrics assumed a leading rôle even at an early date. In 1783, for instance, the committee of guardians of the Cumberland settlement passed a resolution that not more than one silver dollar per quart should be paid for any imported liquor, since the country was being drained of specie by this traffic.¹⁹ Glassware, hardware, fancy groceries, and numerous small articles of household usage were soon added to the list of imports.

In order that these goods might be paid for, exports had to go forward, and before 1800, furs and skins were much the most important of these. They had the advantage of easy shipment overland by means of pack horses. Thus the early settlers were rendered largely independent of waterways for transportation purposes. Other articles of export were ginseng, beeswax, linen and linsey homespun fabrics, and lime.²⁰ It was a slender

¹⁶ *Knoxville Gazette*, June 29, 1793; *American Historical Magazine*, V, 100-4.

¹⁷ Goodspeed Publishing Company (pub.), *History of Tennessee*, pp. 260-62; Holt, *op. cit.*, p. 35. ¹⁸ *Knoxville Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1792. ¹⁹ Putnam, pp. 187-88.

²⁰ On Oct. 28, 1786, Sevier wrote to Caswell, "We will admit that our importa-

trade, but it was enough to supply the simple needs of a simple people.

There was almost no money in the frontier settlements. The early merchants exchanged their imports for the produce of the country, and when they carried their furs to market, they brought back merchandise rather than cash. Indeed, it was not uncommon for the frontiersman to proffer a foxskin for the article he wished to purchase, and receive his change in peltry—which might be one coonskin and ten rabbitskins. Of course the usual procedure was to credit the customer with the balance for future trade. The salaries of the officials of the State of Franklin were paid in peltry.²¹ Values were expressed in peltry or in shillings and pence until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the use of dollars and cents for purposes of evaluation gained ground rapidly.²² Another expedient was to use the certificates in which militiamen who served on the frontier were paid for their services. These were redeemable in produce and hence had a real value which gave them much credit as a medium of exchange.²³

It is surprising that the rivers played so small a part in the early settlement and early trade of the Tennessee country. The "Boat Yard" near the Long Island of the Holston was the center of a limited river traffic, but towns in this neighborhood were located with little reference to water communications.²⁴ Overland routes

tion is not so flattering, but our exports are equal to any."—Ramsey, p. 349; Holt, *op. cit.*, p. 29; *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1791, July 14, 1792, Feb. 23, 1793.

²¹ Draper Papers, *Newspaper Extracts*, III, 438.

²² The Constitutional Convention of 1796 substituted \$1.50 for 10 s. 6 d. Virginia currency as the *per diem* of its members.—Ramsey, p. 652; *Knoxville Gazette*, June 29, 1793.

²³ Putnam, p. 537; *Knoxville Gazette*, March 9, 1793, June 19, 1795.

²⁴ Williams, *Franklin*, p. 251.

were explored before water routes, and most of the travel and traffic followed the former at least as late as 1796.

The earlier settlers who reached Watauga from North Carolina followed a difficult pass over the mountains from Morganton. It was this route which resounded to the tread of the heroes of King's Mountain on their march against Ferguson, and it was the same which Andrew Jackson took when he went west from Salisbury to seek his fortune in new country.²⁵ At first only pack horses could be used upon it, but by 1797 it was converted into what was called a wagon road.²⁶ As a matter of fact, however, it was never anything but the worst of mountain passes; yet it remained the chief North Carolina gateway to the West until about 1795. It is seldom that the course of empire has followed so forbidding a path.

There was a better pass at Flower Gap, just north of the Virginia line, and this route was frequently taken by Bishop Asbury and other travelers,²⁷ but it was a longer way round, and those who started from North Carolina generally took the southern route despite its difficulties.

The situation with regard to eastern communication was revolutionized by the treaty of Holston which Blount negotiated with the Cherokees in 1791. Here the natives ceded a large tract of land of which Knoxville and Asheville came to be the centers. Thus the route of the French Broad was opened, and here lay the best

²⁵ "Journal of John Sevier," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V, 182; F. Hollingsworth (ed.), *Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury*, II, 30-33; R. G. Thwaites (ed.), "Journal of Andre Michaux," *Early Western Travels*, III, 55-62.

²⁶ F. A. Michaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 283 ff; Asbury, *op. cit.*, II, 284-88.

²⁷ *Journal of Asbury*, II, 125-26.

pass across the mountain barrier. By 1795 a wagon road was constructed along this course, and the journey to the West ceased to be a particularly hazardous undertaking. Not only did wagons now reach Knoxville from North Carolina, but by the Saluda Gap they came into this state from Georgia and South Carolina and traveled westward along the French Broad.²⁸

Of course most of the trade of the Tennessee valley country went northward rather than eastward, just as most of the settlers had come down from Virginia. It was a relatively easy matter to extend the road from the Shenandoah Valley along the Great Indian War Path to the new settlements. The road proceeded as the settlements crept southward, reaching Knoxville in 1792.²⁹ Along this thoroughfare wagons constantly conveyed the imports and exports of the region to and from Philadelphia and Baltimore. The freight rates for such transportation were six or seven dollars per hundred pounds.³⁰ A limited river traffic was carried on between Knoxville and New Orleans, but the way was too long and too perilous to be much used.³¹

When James Robertson and his little band trekked to the Cumberland country in 1779, they followed Boone's Wilderness Trail through Cumberland Gap and then moved down the north bank of the Cumberland River.³²

²⁸ *Knoxville Gazette*, July 17, 1795, July 31, 1795; Ramsey, p. 644.

²⁹ *Knoxville Gazette*, Feb. 11, 1792; *Virginia State Papers*, IV, 190, Arthur Campbell to Gov. Randolph, Dec. 5, 1786.

³⁰ D. L. McMurry, "The Indian Policy of the Federal Government and the Economic Development of the Southwest," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 37; F. A. Michaux, p. 266.

³¹ Advertisement gave public notice to all persons who wished to sail from this place to New Orleans on either of the boats, the "Mary," burden twenty-five tons, or the "Little Polly," of fifteen tons, that they would be ready to sail by the first of March, the waters answering.—*Knoxville Gazette*, Feb. 3, 1795.

³² *The South-Western Monthly*, II, 75, Narrative of John Carr.

In 1787 the North Carolina legislature provided that the troops should cut a road from the south end of Clinch Mountain to the Nashville settlement,³³ and this was accomplished in time for the first band of emigrants, including Andrew Jackson, to follow the new highway in 1788.³⁴ This remained the chief road until the treaty of Holston was drawn up and Knoxville was settled. The treaty provided that a road might be constructed westward to the new settlements,³⁵ and a Federal garrison was presently stationed at Southwest Point, where the Clinch flows into the Holston, to guard the highway. Travelers at once began to take the new route,³⁶ but a road was not opened until 1795.³⁷ Under Blount's influence the work was accomplished in that year, the legislature of the Territory having promoted a lottery in the interest of the undertaking. The highway led from Knoxville to Southwest Point, where the river was crossed by ferry. From there the route traversed Indian country for a hundred miles and then crossed the Cumberland River northward of the present site of Carthage. Here Fort Blount had been constructed. The road onward from this point passed through settled country and reached Nashville by way of Gallatin or Bledsoe's Lick.³⁸

In 1792 a postal route was established between Hawkins' Court House, or Rogersville, and Richmond.

³³ *Ibid.*, II, 140, Narrative of Mr. Samuel Blair; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 783-86, 913; Ashe, II, 54; Moore and Foster, I, 312; Goodspeed, *op. cit.*, pp. 336-37.

³⁴ W. E. McElwee, "The Old Road," *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 347-54; Ramsey, pp. 482, 505.

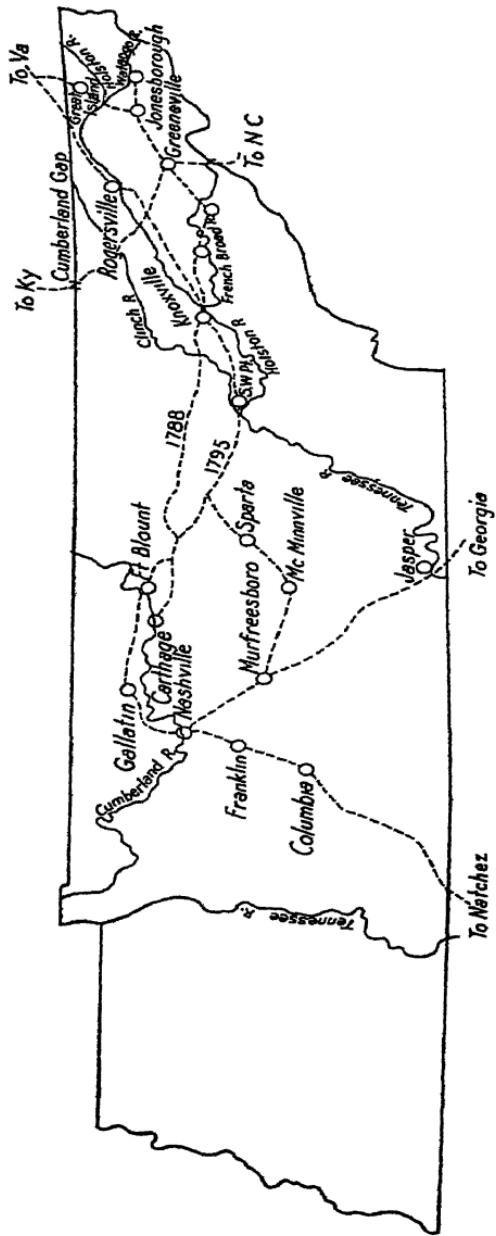
³⁵ H. D. Whitney (ed.), *Land Laws of Tennessee*, pp. 17-19.

³⁶ *Knoxville Gazette*, Oct. 20, 1792, July 27, 1793, June 19, 1794.

³⁷ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., 42/12-14.

³⁸ *Knoxville Gazette*, Jan. 4, Jan. 9, 1795; *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 267, Blount to Robertson, May 30, 1795; *Ibid.*, pp. 258-59, same to same, May 4, 1795.

EARLY ROADS



At this point mail was to arrive fortnightly from the East and be forwarded to Danville, Kentucky, along the Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap.³⁹ During the same year a privately operated route was opened between Knoxville and Abingdon.⁴⁰ In 1794 a Federal postoffice was established at Knoxville.⁴¹ In 1797 the route was carried westward to Nashville⁴² and two years later one William Walton was employed to lay out the post road to that place. This improved highway followed Blount's road from Southwest Point except that it crossed the Cumberland at the mouth of the Caney Fork, south of the old crossing at Fort Blount. Walton himself lived at the new crossing, where the town of Carthage grew up.⁴³

Until 1795 it was necessary for travelers along this western highway to go in bands under the protection of military guards. With the conclusion of Pinckney's treaty with Spain in that year and the consequent pacification of the Indians, such precaution was no longer necessary.

The early settlers in the Holston and Watauga valleys had not found it necessary to build forts for protection from the natives until the outbreak of the Revolution. From that time until 1795 the people of the Tennessee country were never safe except in the neighborhood of some fort or "station."

It was under cover of these fortifications that the Tennessee country was occupied between 1776 and

³⁹ *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 1, 1792; Holt, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

⁴⁰ *Knoxville Gazette*, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, 1792.

⁴¹ J. P. Bretz, "Early Land Communication with the Lower Mississippi Valley," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIII, 4; *Knoxville Gazette*, Nov. 1, 1794.

⁴² Bretz, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴³ Ramsey, p. 708; *Life of J. D. Goodpasture*, pp. 10-11.

1796. Naturally the men who went out into the "dark and bloody ground" did so at the peril of their lives, and at least a third of them paid the extreme penalty for their hardihood.⁴⁴ The colonists who pushed forward under these circumstances were few in number, and they were not weaklings. Men who tilled their fields with their rifles beside them were not the impoverished drifters of the back country. They were pioneers in every sense of the word. They were fighting for empire, and they knew what they were about. At least, their leaders did.

After 1795 the situation was fundamentally changed. The best of the lands which had been cleared of the Indian title were already taken up by the early adventurers and speculators, but the country was no longer dangerous, and, the way having been made comparatively easy for them, the drifters came in to fill up the waste spaces. Seldom does one read of an unmounted traveler on the western roads before 1795. After that date there are numerous accounts of men, women, and children, footsore and bedraggled, trudging along the highways of Tennessee and Kentucky with no other possessions than those which they could carry upon their backs.⁴⁵

Though the Presbyterian church arrived with the Scotch-Irish on the frontier, and certain ministers of that denomination were prominent as teachers and preachers from the earliest years, neither religion nor education was able to keep pace with the advance into the wilderness. There were churches and academies in

⁴⁴ There are numerous lists of killed and wounded in the Robertson Correspondence and elsewhere. See, for instance, Putnam, pp. 330, 461.

⁴⁵ F. A. Michaux, pp. 261-62, 267-69; *Journal of Astbury*, III, 118-19.

the frontier towns, but these reached only a small part of the population. Neither the classical education of the schools nor the formalism of the Calvinistic faith was adapted to meet frontier conditions and the great majority of the settlers got well out from under the influence of both.

Many writers have discussed the influence of the frontier in shaping American life. Its constructive force has generally been stressed, but this destructive element was perhaps more potent than any other. Our civilization was planted across the mountains by men who were, in the main, both unreligious and uneducated, and the consequences of this fact are still obvious. It was only by a retreat into the forest that these pioneers could have escaped two of the strongest and most persistent influences of the old régime. And it was because they did thus escape that a new order was finally established among them.

Among the earliest settlers in the Tennessee country the percentage of literacy was high. Several documents survive from this period which were signed by the people generally, and less than five per cent had to sign by their marks.⁴⁶ These first settlers were the Scotch-Irish and Germans who had but recently left civilization for the wilderness. Those who were reared on the border showed the effects of the environment. Isolation in the wilderness resulted in many of gentle birth growing to maturity without education and with no training whatever in the social conventions of the seaboard. Andrew Jackson's wife, Rachel, for instance, was the daughter of a man of considerable prestige, one of the richest and most distinguished of the western

⁴⁶ *C. R. N. C.*, X, 708-11; *S. R. N. C.*, XXII, 705-14.

Virginians, but she went into the forest when a young girl, and the result was that she was barely literate, and she smoked a pipe on occasion. There were few refining influences in the wilderness during the early years of its occupancy.

Since the challenge of the wilderness was so largely to physical prowess, brawn came to be the most respected of all endowments, and education in time came to be looked upon not only as unnecessary, but as something effete, not quite becoming to men of virility. Wilderness-bred men naturally esteemed most highly those of their fellows who possessed the qualifications of greatest immediate use in the wilderness. In the shadow of the forest he was most useful who was quickest in shoudering the flint-lock, most dexterous in wielding the axe, mightiest in a physical encounter. When men of culture and education removed to the frontier, if they wished to secure the friendship, the business, the suffrage of their backwoods neighbors, they were likely in time to conceal their vintage-marks and to pare down their cultural standards until they appeared to be on a level with those of the ignorant, uncouth frontiersmen. One of the most lasting and pernicious by-products of the frontier is this underrating of education and culture in American life.

A hardy race were these pioneers. They could scalp an Indian⁴⁷—thus turning the tables on the natives—could behead a criminal with a butcher knife and then eat corn from the sack in which they carried the dissevered head,⁴⁸ butcher a pig or a calf and serve up the fresh

⁴⁷ Putnam says of Cockrell, who wounded an Indian, that he "did not tarry to scalp his foe."—p. 376.

⁴⁸ Breazeale, pp. 146-47.

meat within the hour, or devour flesh after the odor had become stifling. They were ready fighters, and an eye was sometimes gouged out or an ear bitten off in the process of fisticuffs.⁴⁹ In the latter event, the unfortunate one would find it necessary to have the fact entered on the court records to protect himself from the suspicion that his ears had been cropped for crime. The frontiersmen loved to shoot and to gamble, to swear and to drink. They chewed tobacco and the women smoked pipes.

At the same time, western character had its lighter and more agreeable side. The old-time fiddler has not yet disappeared from the rural districts, but he is a mere shadow of his former self. In the early settlements he was an important figure. The jig and the square dance were the principal diversions of men and women, young and old, and the fiddler was constantly in demand. No picture of the frontier would be complete without him.⁵⁰

These stalwart backwoodsmen were a blend of much that was fine and much that was coarse. They were as a rule hospitable, generous, honest, and reasonably courageous, though they were not always the intrepid Indian fighters that one is accustomed to imagine them. They liked to "frolick" more than they liked to work, and their tempers were quite undisciplined. They were capable of much cruelty and much kindness, and were inclined to take the cash and let the credit go.

Living conditions were so much the same for all, or nearly all, that travelers on the frontier seemed to find a homogeneity among the population which did not really exist. There was an actual difference between the

⁴⁹ Haywood, pp. 174-75; Putnam, p. 405; Holt, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁰ Putnam, pp. 273, 318, 463-64.

real pioneers and the drifters which was superficially obscured for the time being by economic conditions, but which was to become more obvious as time went on.⁵¹ The drifters by no means all went West, and the poor of the eastern settlements differed no whit from the shiftless westerners except in certain superficial ways. There never was, after all, any definite line of demarcation between the East and the West.

⁵¹ This difference was recognized by some of the more discriminating of the early travelers.—J. B. McFerrin, *History of Methodism in Tennessee*, I, 521.

CHAPTER X

JACKSON, BLOUNT, AND SEVIER

WHEN the state of Tennessee was launched upon its career in the Federal Union, its political allegiance was clearly designated by the colors of the Jeffersonian Republican party. This newly-found unanimity was not so deep-seated as superficial appearances might have led one to believe. There were actually two antagonistic political groups within the state which watched each other with jealous eyes. William Blount and John Sevier headed the two factions.

Sevier had lost none of his prestige since that momentous day when he faced Ferguson's men at King's Mountain. His stronghold was in East Tennessee where a decided majority of the population resided, and it would have been useless for any man to contest with him for the governorship during the early years of the state. The Blount group could do no better than concede this point and maintain a superficial cordiality with the chief magistrate. But Sevier was not invulnerable for all this. He was a frontier Indian fighter rather than a politician, and he never came to understand the methods by which a democracy is governed. For all its enthusiasm, his following was a mere personal clique, with no coherence and no directive leadership. There was no organization, there were no policies, and there was no real politics.

With the other group the situation was exactly the reverse. Blount was never a really popular figure, but

he had the wealth, the position, and the power to attract supporters. Not only this, but he had the insight to select men best fitted to his various purposes. What need had he of personal popularity when he had James Robertson and Andrew Jackson to do his bidding? Beside these, nearly all the other leading men of the Cumberland country were to be numbered among his supporters. Daniel Smith, James Winchester, and John and Thomas Overton were wealthy Virginians who had settled near Nashville at an early date and were soon able to maintain a style of living which one did not ordinarily expect to find upon the frontier. These men, and a few others of their kind, gave Blount undisputed control of Middle Tennessee.

While Sevier's popularity in the eastern part of the state was so great that Blount could maintain himself here only by keeping up a show of friendship with the governor, there was one definitely anti-Sevier faction in this section upon which the opposition could depend. John Tipton had never forgotten the old days of the State of Franklin, and in the counties of Washington and Sullivan he and his family were, at times, able to hold the lines against his ancient rival.¹ In addition to this strength, Blount could count upon the friendship of certain leaders who were friendly to Sevier also. Notable among these were Colonel James White and his son Hugh Lawson. William Cocke, Blount's colleague in the Senate, tended as usual to play a lone hand, but, for practical purposes, coöperated with Sevier when unavoidable.

When Andrew Jackson was chosen by the Blount

¹ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 152, John Tipton to Sevier, (?), 1804; Williams, *Franklin*, pp. 326-27.

following and elected by the people of Tennessee to serve as the state's first member in the Federal House of Representatives, he proved to be a highly successful delegate. The only legislation in which he took active part was a bill providing for the payment of a body of Tennessee militia which, in 1793, had gone upon an Indian expedition in the absence of Governor Blount and without authority from the Federal government.² Naturally the move was heartily approved by the people. In securing compensation, Jackson had to overcome considerable opposition in Congress and his rewards were in proportion to the merits of his service. Sevier would, of course, be conciliated by his efforts, and Blount spoke in high terms of the energy and efficiency of his protégé.

Immediately upon the heels of this success a serious misfortune befell the young congressman. He had previously become engaged in the mercantile business, and in order to procure goods for his trade, had sold extensive Tennessee lands to David Allison, who was now established in Philadelphia. Jackson received from Allison notes for his land, and these he discounted with the merchant from whom he purchased his supplies. In the fall of 1797 Allison failed in business, the notes were protested, and Jackson was called upon to pay. In order to meet this unexpected obligation, he was forced to bring to bear his utmost financial resources. Finally, about 1804, he disposed of his plantation at Hunter's Hill and took up his abode at the Hermitage place, where a log cabin served for some years as his dwelling. Most of his property had to be sacrificed, and his anxious attention was occupied with this business

² Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, I, 212-15; Putnam, pp. 497-98, 521.

for several years, but he carried it through and discharged his debt.³ Nevertheless the ghost of the transaction was to appear later in his career.

It seems certain that these financial considerations, and perhaps others, had induced Jackson to resolve upon retiring from Congress. He did not attend the second session, and in the fall of 1797 Blount was writing to him, to Winchester, and to Robertson, advising that Jackson take a seat in the legislature, that W. C. C. Claiborne be sent to the Federal House of Representatives, and that he himself be returned to the Senate at the expiration of his present term.⁴ It was under such circumstances that Blount's expulsion from the Senate came like a thunder-clap to shatter all these plans.

The details of this incident are well known. When in 1796 Spain joined France in the war against England, a rumor became current in America that Spain was expected to cede Florida to France and that the navigation of the Mississippi would probably again be closed. What this might mean to a western land baron such as Blount was clear, at least to him. He, as an old Federalist, had been pro-English in his attitude before this time. And England had granted the navigation of the Mississippi, as far as she had power to do so, in the treaty of 1783. It did not take Blount long to decide that Florida should be won for England in order to save it from France. To effect this, he planned to use the frontiersmen and the Indians to coöperate with the British in a filibustering expedition. A letter which he wrote to one of his followers, James Carey, an interpreter in the

³ Parton, I, 242-43.

⁴ "Robertson Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 342-43, Blount to Robertson, April 24, 1797.

Cherokee nation, found its way into print, and the plot was exposed. Blount was expelled from the Senate⁵ and made his way to Tennessee where Federal officers who were sent to arrest him were unable to perform their mission because none of the local officials would execute the warrant. Furthermore, Colonel James White resigned his place as president of the state senate and Blount was chosen to fill the vacancy thus created.⁶ Tennesseans were still unable to see why they should not look after their own interests when dealing with their foreign neighbors. To them Blount's designs did not signify disloyalty to the Federal Union but devotion to Tennessee.

In spite of this enthusiastic vindication, Blount's days were numbered. It must have been a profound shock to him who had so unerringly pulled thousands of wires to have pulled at last the wrong one. He knew that his influence in high politics was undermined by this one slip. To add to his distress, he, along with Jackson, had lost heavily as a result of the Allison failure. He died in 1800 and lies buried in Knoxville, all but forgotten save for his last rash venture.⁷ Yet, as long as he lived, he dominated directly and indirectly the politics of the section in which he made his home. He was certainly one of the greatest single forces in the politics of the early Southwest, if not the greatest, and he deserves a larger place in history than that which has been accorded him. After his passing, his place in Tennessee was tak-

⁵Marcus J. Wright, *Some Account of the Life and Services of William Blount*, pp. 42, 113, 133, 140-41, *et passim*; Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 126, Thomas Dillon to Gov. Sevier, July 20, 1797; Ramsey, pp. 699 ff.; Isabel Thompson, "The Blount Conspiracy," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, II, 3-21.

⁶Moore and Foster, II, 248-49; Goodspeed, p. 718.

⁷Wright, *Blount*, p. 142.

en, to a considerable extent, by his half-brother Willie.

As a result of this stroke of ill fortune, the Blount forces had to bestir themselves in order to mend their lines as best they might. Robertson wrote to Cocke recommending Jackson as a fit colleague for him in the Senate,⁸ and Sevier communicated with Robertson concerning the situation.⁹ The result was that Jackson, in the autumn of 1797, was selected to fill the place left vacant by his chief.

Jackson's first experience in the Senate was by no means a creditable episode in his career. It appears that he took no active part whatsoever in the councils of that body, and resigned at the end of a few months of nominal service.¹⁰ It is usually assumed that he was not the type of man for the kind of work required of a senator. The impressions which Jefferson and Gallatin formed of him in Congress and expressed at a much later time picture him as a backwoodsman of uncontrolled passions and slender abilities.¹¹ Yet one does not acquire his bearing and his discernment late in life, and Jackson, after he became well known, was a man of distinguished bearing even in the presence of the most distinguished; and, while sometimes veering to rashness, he was not without shrewdness in the councils of the most sagacious. It is difficult to believe that he cut so poor a figure in the presence of Thomas Jefferson, who later had much reason to dislike him and probably permitted this dislike to tincture his opinion. Though it is certainly true that Jackson did not relish the work of a senator, he was possessed of too great ability and too strong a

⁸ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, IV, 344-45, Robertson to Wm. Cocke, Aug. 1, 1797.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 343-44, 345.

¹⁰ Parton, I, 216-19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 219-20.

determination to have failed, had he really put his hand to the task, where so many mediocrities have succeeded. It seems reasonable to assume that he was still too involved in the difficulties in which the Allison failure had enmeshed him to attend to his legislative duties, and seeing that he could not accomplish his task, he gave it up.

Daniel Smith was now brought forward to take the vacated seat in the Senate. Blount, nearing the end of his days, used his influence once again for the protégé whom as a stripling he had launched on a political career, and who was yet to reach heights not dreamed of by his patron. He wrote to Sevier recommending Jackson for a judgeship on the superior court.¹² This program was carried through and the Blount faction appeared to be entrenched as strongly as ever in the politics of the state.

By 1801 Sevier had served three consecutive terms as governor and was ineligible for a fourth. Their chief had passed off the scene, but the Blount element was not at a loss to supply a candidate, and Archibald Roane, one of the young lawyers who had come West along with Jackson and Allison, was elected to the office. Roane had received appointment under Governor Blount during the territorial period, and at one time had been tutor to Hugh Lawson White. It was during his administration that the major-generalship of the militia fell vacant, and Jackson and Sevier became rival candidates for the honor.

Jackson had long aspired to this office, though he had never held any commission higher than that of a judge-

¹² Blount to Sevier, July 6, 1798, Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box B 2, No. 158; A. V. Goodpasture, "The Genesis of the Jackson-Sevier Feud," *American Historical Magazine*, V, 121-22.

advocate. Under the existing law, the general was elected by the field officers of the command. When Conway was elected in 1796, Jackson quarreled with Sevier on the ground that the latter had tried to influence the result by deputizing Joel Lewis to issue commissions in the governor's name.¹³ Sevier was guilty of a similar offense during the next year and Jackson again complained, but the quarrel was smoothed over for the time.¹⁴

The rivalry between these two hotspurs for the coveted commission was not calculated to improve relations between them. When the vote was tied and Roane threw his casting ballot to Jackson, Sevier was soon able to retaliate by having the state cut into two division-areas, thus reducing Jackson's command by half. It was during the same month that a Tennessee expedition was organized to assist in taking possession of Louisiana. Sevier appointed Cocke to command this force, and Jackson was left to cool his heels while his rival was given opportunity to win laurels which he himself so ardently coveted.¹⁵

In 1803 Sevier was again eligible for the governorship. Roane contested the election with him. Jackson, who had become the leader of the Blount forces in Middle Tennessee, threw all his energy into the canvass for his old friend, and in so doing incurred the undying hatred of Sevier.

In 1796, when on his way to Congress for the first time, Jackson had become possessed of information that land

¹³ Goodpasture, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19; Moore and Foster, I, 302 ff.

¹⁴ J. S. Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, I, 32-33, Jackson to Sevier, May 8, 1797.

¹⁵ S. C. Williams, "Tennessee's First Military Expedition," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, VII, 171-90; *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 77-78, Jackson to Henry Dearborn, Nov. 12, 1803.

frauds were being perpetrated through the office of James Glasgow, secretary of state for North Carolina. This information he communicated to the governor of that state, and an investigation was presently instituted.¹⁶ Governor Ashe of North Carolina called on Governor Sevier of Tennessee for the papers of Martin Armstrong's office in Nashville. Sevier failed to comply, and Ashe then appealed to Judges John McNairy and Howell Tatum for assistance. The judges secured the papers and the investigation proceeded. Realizing their danger, the swindlers were ready to resort to desperate measures.¹⁷ A meeting was held at the house of William Blount and a plot hatched to commission William Tyrrell to secure the land records or burn the building in which they were stored. The plot was discovered and revealed to Judges McNairy and Tatum, who reported it to Governor Ashe in time to save the papers.¹⁸ Finally, on March 24, 1798, Messrs. Gaither, Graham, and Locke submitted their report on the frauds. It revealed a depth of infamy on the part of some of the leading men of North Carolina and Tennessee which is almost beyond belief. James Glasgow, Martin Armstrong, and John Armstrong were the leading officials implicated. William Tyrrell, William T. Lewis, and Stockley Donelson, along with many lesser men, were also involved. Fraudulent grants had been issued and forgeries practised on a

¹⁶ Parton, I, 231.

¹⁷ North Carolina Historical Commission, *Legislative Papers*, 1797, Report of committee on governor's message; *Ibid.*, *Governors' Papers*, XXI, Martin Armstrong to Governor Ashe, Jan. 13, 1798, Charles J. Love to Andrew Jackson, Jan. 31, 1798, Howell Tatum to Governor Ashe, Feb. 9, 1798, Andrew Jackson to Governor Ashe, Feb. 10, 1798, Samuel Ashe to Judges McNairy and Tatum, n. d.

¹⁸ North Carolina Historical Commission, *Governors' Papers*, XXI, John McNairy to Governor Ashe, Feb. 13, 1798, Judge Tatum to Governor Ashe, Feb. 13, 1798.

grand scale.¹⁹ In the State Library of Tennessee there are photostatic copies of six plats of surveys which appear to have been made by Abraham Swogarty for Stockley Donelson in 1795. Together they include slightly more than four million acres, or about one-sixth of the state of Tennessee! Governor Ashe called on Governor Sevier for the extradition of some of the culprits,²⁰ but the demand was refused, and the report of the committee appears never to have been published.

John Sevier was among those found to be implicated, but Jackson made no use of this information for a period of three years. Political emergency then stimulated his conscience, and it was in 1801, on the very day Roane cast the vote which made Jackson a major general, that the papers concerning Sevier's connection with the land frauds were put into the hands of the governor.²¹ It has usually been assumed that this coincidence shows the move to have been intended to influence Roane's vote in the military election, but the connection between Roane and Jackson as followers of Blount had been so close as to make this conclusion appear unwarranted in spite of its apparent obviousness. The governor would certainly have voted as he did without any pressure having been brought to bear.

The facts in the case against Sevier have been accessible for over a hundred years, but no historian has yet seen fit to make conclusive use of them. Sevier is a pretty frontier idol. He was worshipped by the "honest farmers" of his own day; their peers of the present day

¹⁹ North Carolina Historical Commission, *Governors' Papers*, XXI, Report of Messrs. Gaither, Graham, and Locke, March 24, 1798.

²⁰ North Carolina Historical Commission, *Governors' Papers*, XXI, Governor of North Carolina to Governor of Tennessee, June 18, 1798.

²¹ *Goodpasture, op. cit.*, p. 117; Hale and Merritt, pp. 234-35.

are equally jealous of their heroes. Nevertheless, there is not a flaw in the evidence as it was presented to the public in 1803.

The case is as follows. In 1779 North Carolina passed an act which confiscated Tory property and permitted "Patriots" to buy it in with depreciated paper currency. Having some of these funds available, Sevier and Landon Carter, entry-taker for the land office of Washington County, combined and secured warrants for 128,000 acres.²² The lands entered according to this act were to be paid for at the rate of fifty shillings the hundred acres, and were to be located in the county where the entry was made. The power of the Radicals who had passed the legislation was much shaken in 1781, and though the confiscatory acts were not repealed, their application was greatly modified and a large number of Tory suspects were able, by virtue of cautious conduct and the forbearance of the Conservatives, to retain their estates. It thus happened that the speculators found much less desirable land open to entry in Washington County than they had anticipated. Therefore, for the time being, they let the matter drop. Finally, in 1795, they evidently got wind of the fact that James Glasgow, whose business it was to issue grants to legitimate claimants, was a man of liberal sentiments. Accordingly Sevier wrote to him and suggested a plan. He explained the difficulties which he had encountered in securing desirable tracts under the act of 1779, and inquired whether, under more recent legislation, he might not make use of his claims.²³

²² Paper preserved in Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box S 1, No. 20. The document is published in *American Historical Magazine*, III, 83-84.

²³ Draper Papers, Kings Mountain MSS., XI, 121, John Sevier to James Glasgow, June 1, 1795; Journal of John Sevier, *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V. 181.

It was a difficult case, but Sevier and Glasgow found a solution.

Under the act of 1783, which established John Armstrong's office, lands were to be entered west of the mountains at ten pounds the hundred acres. Sevier now asked Glasgow, as a slight favor for which compensation was offered, to insert on the face of the grants that ten pounds rather than fifty shillings had been the consideration paid for the lands. This would make it appear that the tracts were being taken up under the act of 1783 instead of that of 1779, and Glasgow granted the "favor"!

But there were complications in the matter the handling of which required other business methods. The entries had been made in Landon Carter's Washington County office, and the numbers on some of these new entries duplicated the numbers of previous entries on which grants had already been issued in the county. Legislation passed in 1784 had provided that when an entry conflicted with a former one, the later, or supernumerary entry, might be removed and located on lands not previously granted. The books in Carter's office would prove Sevier's entries to be forgeries, since no two entries could legally bear the same number, all being numbered *seriatim* as they were registered in the office. If the books should disappear, the conspirators might claim that their entries were supernumeraries, and hence, under the act of 1784, could be removed to lands west of the mountains. This was the object of all the scheming. The books conveniently disappeared, and grants were actually issued by Glasgow to Sevier for some of the lands desired west of the Cumberlands.

In 1801 John Carter turned over the papers of his father's office to William Maclin, who had been appointed

to receive them. But Sevier's bundle of warrants was turned over to Governor Roane with affidavit of John Carter, sworn before Willie Blount, J. P., to the effect that these claims appeared not to belong properly to the office, but to have been fraudulently inserted by Sevier, in whose hand the papers were signed. No charge was made by anyone that Carter's father shared the blame for the insertion of these bogus claims. It is possible that none except Carter himself and the Seviers knew of his guilt. It is possible, however, that Jackson forced Carter to turn state's evidence under a threat to tell all he knew of the father's connection with the deal to which the son had been a witness. It is difficult to see what other motive would have induced the younger Carter to surrender evidence which he knew to be so incriminating.

During 1801 this information was retained in the governor's hands, and it would appear that the people got no wind of it. In 1802, however, with the campaign between Roane and Sevier in progress, the time was ripe to bring into play the powerful weapon which the Roane following possessed in this evidence. Jackson and the Blount forces, who were supporting Roane against his rival, could control West Tennessee, but East Tennessee was loyal to its hero. As a move in the campaign, Jackson published in the *Knoxville Gazette* the story of Sevier's connection with the fraud.²⁴ During the next year John Tipton brought the matter up in the legislature. The papers were submitted to the assembly by the governor, the matter was canvassed, and resolutions were passed showing Sevier to be guilty

²⁴ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 373 ff., Andrew Jackson to Mr. Bradford, Feb. 10, 1802.

as charged.²⁵ Sevier made a statement saying that he had secured no lands except such as had been paid for. This was as true as it was intended to be deceptive.²⁶

The Jackson forces could control the legislature but not the people. Unwelcome evidence rarely has noticeable effect in a democracy. The people lovingly expurgated from their memories all information unfavorable to their hero and returned the old campaigner to the governor's chair in triumphant fashion. History has accepted the vindication thus registered. For six years more the prize was in the hands of the victor.

On the last day of September, 1803, with the question of the land frauds about to come before the legislature, Judge Jackson, who was holding court in Knoxville, met Sevier in the public square. This gentleman, sword in hand, was indulging in a furious tirade against the Judge. Jackson denounced Sevier in the best frontier manner, and promptly challenged him. There was much quibbling as to the time and place of the *rencontre*, for Sevier refused to fight within the limits of Tennessee, where duelling was prohibited by law. He suggested a meeting outside the state and proposed that they fight it out with pistols, "presuming you know nothing about the use of any other arms," he wrote—a covert sneer at Jackson's ignorance of fencing and hence at his assumed status of "gentleman." Sevier further informed him that he would not condescend to notice him except for the fact that the people had made him a judge and thereby

²⁵ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1803, 156-59.

²⁶ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 68-69, Sevier to Robertson, May 30, 1803. On Nov. 8, 1803, Sevier wrote to Robertson, "If he [Jackson] has any objections against me respecting land, he might have had as much and perhaps a great deal more against some nearer home, whose conduct would probably have had reason to have tarnished his own house, and injured and disturbed his quiet, much more

promoted him to the unmerited status of gentleman.²⁷ No rendezvous was ever agreed on, but Sevier made a journey to Southwest Point and Jackson met him on the road as he was returning to Knoxville. Another verbal tilt ensued. Although pistols were drawn, neither fired.²⁸ This was the unconsummated end of the affray, but the enmity between them continued with unabated fervor throughout their lives.

That two men of such passionate temper as Jackson and Sevier should drop the fight at this stage seems strange indeed. One writer has suggested that Jackson was afraid of the vengeance of Sevier's numerous sons. This is not a plausible reason when applied to "Old Hickory," for he ever leaned to the side of physical foolhardiness. That it was fear of the political consequences which deterred him from pressing the fight is more than likely. The man who killed Sevier would have been politically dead. In spite of this, however, it seems to have been Sevier rather than Jackson who avoided the fight. His scrupulous legal-mindedness in refusing an encounter in Tennessee is nothing less than amusing. Tennessee historians have been tender of Sevier's reputation. Had Jackson been guilty of the conduct of his adversary, he would not have come off so lightly at the hands of posterity.

In 1801 Jackson considered retiring from the bench of

than mine could have done. . . . I am bound to view him, Judge Jackson, as one of the most abandoned rascals in principle my eyes ever beheld."—*American Historical Magazine*, IV, 373-74. This doubtless relates to Stockley Donelson, Jackson's brother-in-law, who was implicated along with Sevier.

²⁷ Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box S 1, No. 24 1-2, Sevier to Jackson, Oct. 10, 1803; *Ibid.*, No. 22, Sevier to Jackson, Oct. 1, 1803; *Ibid.*, No. 24, same to same, Oct. 10, 1803; *Ibid.*, No. 23, same to same, Oct. 3, 1803.

²⁸ Parton, I, 233-35; *American Historical Magazine*, V, 208-9, affidavit of Andrew Geer, Oct. 23, 1803. Parton's account is inaccurate.

the superior court but consented to retain his seat because Hugh Lawson White had indicated that he would accept a similar place only on condition that Jackson remain.²⁹ In 1804, with the reverse of the previous year rankling in his mind, the Judge resolved upon retirement. He had harbored some hope of receiving an appointment as governor of Louisiana, being recommended therefor by the Tennessee delegation in Congress, but, disliking to appear in the rôle of office-seeker, he did not press his claim. As a consequence, Jefferson passed him over in favor of another Tennessean, W. C. C. Claiborne.³⁰ While he still retained considerable political influence and kept up his interest in his military position, he was not connected actively with public affairs and probably had no expectation other than that of retaining the status of an opulent planter to the end of his days.

Two events occurred in 1806 which struck still deeper at Jackson's prestige. One was the duel with Dickinson, the other was the Burr episode. In this most famous of Jackson's duels, an older man fought a younger who was reputed to be the best marksman in Tennessee. It seems clear that the General had no great hope of emerging from the affray alive, and he had nothing to gain if successful. He did not press the fight. The fight rather was pressed upon him, but he went through it with unflinching courage and iron nerve. Some years afterward the statement was made by his political enemies that an oral agreement was entered into before the encounter that a snap should count as a shot; that Jackson's pistol had snapped, but that he claimed it

²⁹ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 60, Jackson to Robert Hayes, Sept. 9, 1801.

³⁰ Parton, I, 236-38; *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 90-91.

had stopped at the half-cock and had fired contrary to the agreement.³¹ If this statement were true, it was strange that nothing was said about it for so many years, and queerer still that the seconds had not attended to the matter on the spot. Seconds would hardly be supposed to see their principal shot down contrary to regulations. The accusation was typical of the methods resorted to by the local group which opposed Jackson.

The matter of the Burr episode was more serious. When Burr was preparing his descent upon New Orleans, Jackson entertained him at the Hermitage, built boats for him, and permitted his nephew and ward, Stokley Hays, to accompany the adventurer.³² If Burr were guilty of treason, it certainly appeared that Jackson was guilty of aiding him. But only Jackson's enemies believed, or professed to believe, that he had suspected Burr of any unpatriotic designs. If only a filibustering expedition against Spanish territory were intended, there is no reason to believe Jackson would have hesitated to assist, as he doubtless would have assisted Blount a few years previously had his scheme reached fruition. As soon as he received information that Burr was suspected of treasonable motives, he exercised his military authority in an attempt to apprehend him, but he later became convinced that no treason had been intended. When called to Richmond to appear as a witness in the trial, Jackson made a speech in favor of Burr and against the Jefferson administration.³³ In 1808 Burr was again a guest at the Hermitage.³⁴ His stand aligned Jackson with the anti-administration wing of the Republican party

³¹ *Banner-Whig*, Sept. 20, 1828.

³² Parton, I, 321.

³³ A. C. Buell, *History of Andrew Jackson* (New York, 1904), I, 204-6.

³⁴ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 189-90, Jackson to G. W. Campbell, Aug. 5, 1808.

and had an important bearing upon his later career.³⁵

It has been said that when Burr was burned in effigy in the streets of Nashville, it was more an anti-Jackson than an anti-Burr demonstration.³⁶ Certainly the General had not gained in prestige as a result of the events of 1806. He was doubtless more determined than ever to remain in retirement, but by 1809 Sevier had served his second quota of three consecutive administrations, and Jackson's old ally, Willie Blount, was elected to succeed him as governor. Blount also retained the executive chair for three terms, and it was this turn of the wheel that gave Jackson his chance during the Creek War of 1813. Sevier was sent to Congress after his retirement as governor, but he cut no great figure in the House of Representatives, and died rather inconspicuously in 1815. Nevertheless he has been cherished even above Jackson as the hero of the Volunteer State.

By this time a well marked sectionalism had developed in Tennessee. Sevier's forces were strongly entrenched in the eastern section, while the Blount-Jackson following controlled West Tennessee. This political alignment, along with the geographical separateness of the two areas, led to the development of a keen rivalry. The eastern region was the older, the more populous, and up to this time the dominant political division. Knoxville was the capital and here the commercial life of the state had its center. While the western section was newer and less populous, it was more fertile country, and Nashville was a better situated commercial capital than was Knoxville. It was evident that there would soon be a contest for supremacy between the two divisions, and the east watched the west suspiciously.

³⁵ Bassett, *Jackson*, I, 54; Buell, *Jackson*, I, 227 ff.

³⁶ Buell, *Jackson*, I, 198.

CHAPTER XI

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

THE MOST important problem Tennessee was called upon to settle during the period elapsing between her admission to the Union and the outbreak of the second war with England was that of the public lands. It was a complicated question, one involving heavy economic interests, and one penetrating deeply into the high politics of the state. It is, therefore, a subject which well illustrates the quality of the democracy of the period.

When North Carolina ceded the Tennessee country to the Federal government in 1790, it was with the proviso that the claims of her Revolutionary soldiers should be made good, even though the area contained in the military reservation should not be adequate to satisfy them. There was a further agreement that all land claims set up under the previous laws of North Carolina should be valid even though they had not, at the time of the cession, been ripened into grants. When the cession was made, the state law provided that such claims should be perfected by 1792.

It was in 1797 that the North Carolina assembly undertook the investigation of land frauds which resulted in the implication of John Sevier, James Glasgow, and many others. As a consequence of these disclosures, it began passing acts calculated to invalidate fraudulent claims to western lands. In spite of the original provision that surveys should be completed by 1792, the time limit had been indefinitely extended, and the provision

regarding military claims was construed as meaning that the state might continue to issue warrants to soldiers who had fought in the Revolution. Now the military land office was temporarily closed, and attempts were made to discover and cancel illegal warrants. In this connection it was enacted that assignments of claims should be proven and recorded. Since many of these had changed hands frequently, proof was often a difficult matter, and numerous claimants had their titles called into question.¹ The situation was serious in Tennessee, for not only would land values be unsettled, but immigration discouraged. It was this condition which led Tennessee first to take up the question of the public lands. Feeling that her interests were adversely affected by the legislation of another state, and maintaining that North Carolina had no right to complete titles to Tennessee lands after 1792, she took the case into her own hands. Not only did she deny the rights of North Carolina, but she denied those of Congress as well. Asserting that the Federal government had no claim upon Tennessee lands because no reservation to that effect had been made when the state was admitted to the Union, she proceeded in 1799 to establish land offices of her own and to provide for granting titles.² This act was not to go into effect, however, until 1801, and in that year a further assertion of her rights and a further suspension of the act took place. In 1803 John Overton was sent to North Carolina and succeeded in bringing about the passage by that state of an act which proved to be the first step in the settlement of the triangular dispute.³ During the next

¹ *Impartial Review*, Nashville, Nov. 15, 29, 1806, Jan. 31, 1807.

² A. V. Goodpasture, "Education and the Public Lands in Tennessee," *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 218-19.

³ L. D. Smith, "Land Titles in Tennessee," *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual*

year Tennessee ratified North Carolina's proposition and in 1806 Congress passed an act ending the long-drawn-out agitation.⁴

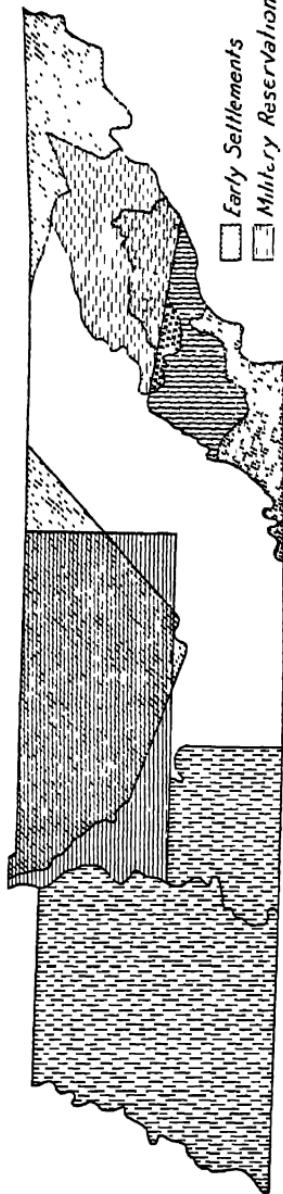
This settlement of 1806 is the foundation of the Tennessee land system. By its terms, Congress reserved for the use of the Federal government all lands lying west of the Tennessee River and also a broad adjoining strip extending eastward along the southern boundary of the state. There were practically no settlers in this area at the time, but certain North Carolina claims had been located here under the act of 1783. Such claims were not invalidated, but no new North Carolina claims were to be set up in the area unless other available land should prove inadequate to satisfy them. To Tennessee was surrendered the authority to satisfy North Carolina claims, and military warrants might be located outside the military reservation if the land within should not be sufficient. Six hundred forty acres were to be reserved out of every township for the use of public schools.

Aside from the congressional reservation, there was one other area not open for the satisfaction of North Carolina claims. This was the old district south of the French Broad and Holston rivers which had been reserved to the Cherokees by the act of 1783. In 1786 John Sevier, governor of the State of Franklin, purchased from the natives by the treaty of Dumplin Creek that part of this tract which lay north of the Little Tennessee River. On the dissolution of the State of Franklin, the validity of this cession was not recognized. White settlers had, nevertheless, occupied the territory. In 1791 Blount's treaty of Holston secured most of this

Meeting of the Bar Association of Tennessee, 55-56; American State Papers, Lands, I, 211-14

⁴ *American State Papers, Lands, I, 584-85.*

LAND MAP OF TENNESSEE



Early Settlements	
Military Reservations	1783
Cherokee Reservations	1783
Blount's Purchase	1791
Purchase of	1798
Congressional Reservation	1806
Hiwassee District	1819
Ocoee District	1835

tract, along with a larger area, from the Indians, and counties were established here under authority of the Southwest Territory, but no provision was made for granting titles to the land. Since this left the settlers in the status of squatters, the Tennessee constitution of 1796 provided that the requirement of a freehold for the exercise of political privileges would be waived in their case.⁵ Thus the situation remained until the passage of the act of 1806.

It was now provided that all the old Cherokee reservation, being free from North Carolina claims, should belong to the state of Tennessee. Within the area already acquired from the Indians there should be located a tract of one hundred thousand acres for the establishment of two colleges, a like tract for the establishment of an academy in each county of the state, and six hundred forty acres in each township for the benefit of public schools. This land was not to be sold for less than two dollars an acre except in the case of settlers already on it, who might buy it at a price of one dollar per acre.⁶

Thus the lands of the state were divided between North Carolina, Tennessee, and the Federal government, but the only area thrown upon the market was that part of the district south of the French Broad and Holston which had already been secured from the Indians. Even here most of the good tracts were already occupied by settlers who had the right of preëmption. As to other lands lying north and west of the congressional reservation line, Tennessee became merely the administrator of North Carolina claims. In 1791 Jefferson had issued a report stating that all the lands in this area fit for cultivation and to which the Indian title had been

⁵ Ramsey, p. 655.

⁶ Whitney, *Land Laws of Tennessee*, pp. 58-61.

extinguished would be required to satisfy these North Carolina liens.⁷ And not even Secretary Jefferson realized the whole truth of the situation.

The question of securing a new cession from the natives had occupied the attention of speculators for some time. Nothing had been done in this direction since the treaty of Holston, and even a part of the military reservation lay within the Indian boundaries. Many, if not most, of those enormous claims set up in John Armstrong's office as a result of the infamous act of 1783 lay in country which the red men still possessed. The claimants were clamoring for possession. They sent petitions to the legislature, and both Tennessee and North Carolina petitioned Congress in their behalf.⁸ The Federalists were in control at Philadelphia, and they did not move rapidly in favor of western land speculators. In 1797 orders were issued to remove squatters from the Indian lands, and many families were ejected by Federal authority.⁹ It looked as though matters were coming to a crisis, but a pacification was accomplished by the negotiation of a new treaty with the Cherokees in 1798. Three small areas adjoining the Holston cession were acquired by the whites,¹⁰ and peace was restored.

The appetite for land, however, was insatiable, and

⁷ *American State Papers, Lands*, V, 23-24, Report of the Secretary of State on lands granted the United States by North Carolina. Also printed in the *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 31, 1791.

⁸ A petition presented to the North Carolina Assembly, under date of Dec. 21, 1793, bears the signatures of Thomas Person, J. Rutledge, Hugh Williamson, William Polk, and Robert Irwen.—*Knoxville Gazette*, April 24, 1794. One of December, 1796, was signed by J. Glasgow, J. G. Blount, and M. Matthews.—*American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 624-26. See also *Steele's Papers*, II, 772-75; *American State Papers, Lands*, I, 78, 123-24, 162, 180-81.

⁹ Ramsey, 679-86, 692 ff., 698.

¹⁰ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 370, Wm. Blount to Jas. Robertson, Oct. 1, 1788.

the agitation to acquire it was kept up. These efforts received their reward in 1805 and 1806 when treaties were negotiated with the Chickasaws and Cherokees whereby they surrendered most of the remaining country which they held in East and Middle Tennessee.¹¹ It was now that the North Carolina claimants had their first big opportunity, and they made the most of it. No new entries were to be made upon the ceded lands until 1808, but speculators and their agents crowded in to locate the best tracts and to make arrangements for settling their claims upon them.¹² The towns of Columbia, Pulaski, and Shelbyville were soon to grow up in the country south of Nashville, and it was in these years that the family of James K. Polk settled itself in the neighborhood of the first of these communities.

Matters having progressed so far, the next step was for Tennessee to devise a plan for satisfying the North Carolina warrants in the territory now open for that purpose, and also for the disposal of her own allotment south of the French Broad and Holston. In connection with this legislation there developed a bitter political

¹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 72-74, R. J. Meigs to Jas. Robertson, Dec. 21, 1804; *Ibid.*, 76-77, Wm. Maclin to Jas. Robertson, Oct. 5, 1804; Putnam, p. 591, letter from the Chickasaws to Robertson. The Chickasaw treaty was negotiated by James Robertson and Silas Dinsmore. Henry Dearborn, the Secretary of War, reprimanded them for including in their expense accounts such delicacies as raisins, anchovies, cinnamon, and pickles. The two negotiators seemed to look upon the matter as something of a joke.—*American Historical Magazine*, V, 87-89. The worthy Secretary had previously written to Robertson, July 3, 1805: “I have the honor [!] to remark that if any particular individual, among the Chickasaws, who may be opposed to the proposed cession of lands, and who may have considerable influence with the Nation, can be induced to change the direction of his influence, by any reasonable means, the Commissioners will please to act in such cases as circumstances may require.”—*American Historical Magazine*, V, 84.

¹² Putnam, p. 570; Overton Papers, E. Williams to Jno. Overton, Feb. 22, 1826. So great was the influx of new families to West Tennessee that the price of corn rose from a dollar to four or five dollars a barrel.—*Impartial Review*, May 9, 1807.

struggle which divided the state into two hostile camps and established an internal sectionalism which influenced political alignments for years to come.

One of the factions in this controversy was composed of the old Blount following, and the opposing group was made up of the Sevier element. In regard to the public lands, the Blount adherents were legalists. Their former leader had largely controlled the North Carolina legislation under which their claims were derived, and men who can control the law have little reason to circumvent it. They were business men; and their business methods were sound. Though some of their associates may have been guilty of frauds, as a body they opposed the granting of land except upon good legal claims. The Sevier group, on the other hand, had never had the advantages enjoyed by their rivals. Sevier's own career illustrates the temptation presented to outsiders to secure lands by illegal or extra-legal means. Such men would favor a loose construction of the land laws. This was the basis of the alignment on the legislation of 1806.

In order to secure their ends, the Blount group of Middle, or West Tennessee, as it was then called, proposed a law providing for the registration of all claims, and a regular and complete survey of the lands according to the system employed by the Federal government. Rectangular sections were to be marked off before grants would be made and the lines of the tracts run according to the official survey. Thus fraudulent surveys and claims would often be exposed. Furthermore, the keeping of the land records would be much simplified. The state was to be divided into districts and a land office established in each for the entering, surveying, and recording of claims. In addition, two state boards

were to be established whose duty it would be to investigate all claims and declare void those which had not been secured legally.¹³ This was an efficient system, and it was to be made more palatable to the people by granting a preëmption right of two hundred acres to such actual settlers as could produce North Carolina claims sufficient to cover the plats they had improved.¹⁴ This meant merely that actual settlers were to have the right to locate their claims, to the extent of two hundred acres, upon the lands which they occupied even though there were a conflicting claim. This was not much, but it was something for democracy.

The opposing group strongly objected to the plan of a general survey and to the boards which were to pass on the legality of all claims. They objected also to the pre-emption provision, maintaining that it conflicted with the North Carolina stipulation that no discrimination should be made against her citizens in favor of the citizens of Tennessee. What they wished was a free and easy system which would give an equal chance to all claims, legal and illegal alike.¹⁵ East Tennessee, where this element dominated, had a preponderance in the councils of the state, and it would seem that her spokesmen should have won their case, but the West Tennessee group accomplished a political manoeuvre worthy of William Blount himself.

This adroit business concerned the district south of the French Broad and Holston. There was nothing mandatory about the reduced rate to settlers in this area

¹³ Abram Maury was the author of the act.—*Impartial Review*, Aug. 16, Sept. 20, Nov. 8, 29, 1806.

¹⁴ *Impartial Review*, Nov. 8, 1806.

¹⁵ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1806, pp. 81-82, 86-87; *Impartial Review*, Nov. 22, Dec. 6, 1806.

provided by the congressional act of 1806. Most of the lands they occupied were to be sold for the benefit of schools and colleges, and East Tennessee wished to secure the maximum assistance for these institutions. This section consequently opposed any reduction in the price of the lands. West Tennessee favored granting the reduced price.¹⁶ Not only this, but the westerners proposed to require that only one-tenth of the purchase price be paid down, and the remainder in annual installments over a period of ten years. By this stand they won the support of the residents south of the French Broad and Holston. This was the margin of their victory, for they thus secured the votes necessary to carry their land bill against the opposition of East Tennessee.¹⁷

This was the first time the question of education had come before the people of Tennessee in the form of a political issue. The sectional alignment which it produced remained the same until Andrew Johnson, an East Tennessee governor, secured in 1853 the passage of the first act levying a tax for the support of public instruction. Furthermore, the alliance between West Tennessee and the southeastern part of the state was to endure for years and play an important part in the politics of the succeeding period.¹⁸ In fact, there has persisted from the Jackson period until the present time a Democratic island in the southern part of East Tennes-

¹⁶ *Impartial Review*, Nov. 29, 1806.

¹⁷ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1806, pp. 84-85; *Impartial Review*, Dec. 6, 1806.

¹⁸ A. V. Goodpasture, "Education and the Public Lands in Tennessee," *loc. cit.*, pp. 222-23, quoting John Bell's address to the alumni of the University of Nashville, 1830; *American Historical Magazine*, VIII, 74. On Oct. 28, 1805, R. C. Foster wrote to James Robertson, "East Tennessee . . . having long brandished the arm of power, in the Council of State, feel an awful struggle at laying it down . . ." *American Historical Magazine*, V, 91-93.

see which would seem to be traceable to these beginnings. So tenacious are voting habits and political tradition!

In order to offset the apparent democracy of the West Tennessee land program, East Tennessee came forward with a proposition to call a new constitutional convention.¹⁹ We have no statement of the reforms which were intended to be brought about in the government of the state. Vagueness on this point was not unnatural, as the whole proposition was merely a move in the political game being played between the two sections. The alignment was the same as in the votes on the land bill, with the west solidly opposing the convention. It won this contest also by the assistance of the representatives from south of the French Broad.²⁰

Thus the matter was settled for a time, but its shadow was to appear before the legislature again and again in future years. When payments on their lands fell due, the French Broad settlers usually found themselves unable to meet them and petitioned the assembly for relief. Time after time East Tennessee demanded the money for the use of the schools, and time after time West Tennessee proposed relief for the debtors. The latter section won in most cases, and the final result was that the schools received almost no assistance from the donation generously made them by the Federal government in 1806.²¹ Not only this, but the cause of education was prejudiced in the minds of the people by this struggle. Colleges were held up as institutions intended for the sons of the rich, and poor men were told that they deserved none

¹⁹ Letter from R. C. Foster, *Impartial Review*, Sept. 13, 1806.

²⁰ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1806, p. 85; *Impartial Review*, Dec. 20, 1806.

²¹ Moore and Foster, I, 316-17.

of their support.²² This was one of the outstanding characteristics of Jacksonian Democracy.

A great cry was raised by the "outsiders" against the Tennessee land act of 1806 and inspired meetings were got up in the several counties to protest against it.²³ Governor Sevier was petitioned to call the legislature into extra session to repeal or modify it, but he refused on the ground that no change could be expected until a new election should be held.²⁴ The session of 1807 did modify the provision of the act to some extent, but not for the better.²⁵ In the main, the statute of 1806 remained the basis of the Tennessee land system.

²² *Impartial Review*, Dec. 13, 1806.

²³ *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 29, 1806.

²⁴ Putnam, 577-79; *Impartial Review*, Nov. 1, 1806. Sevier appears to have been out of line with his section of the state on the important question of the settlers south of the French Broad.—*Impartial Review*, Aug. 9, 1806, Governor's message to the Assembly.

²⁵ L. D. Smith, "Land Titles in Tennessee," *loc. cit.*, p. 57; Tennessee Assembly, Journal of the House of Representatives, 1807 (MS. in Tennessee archives), p. 259.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRONTIER COMMUNITY

THE STORY of the founding of Nashville in the winter of 1779 by James Robertson and his little band of adventurers has been recounted. We have seen how that community struggled with the Indians for its very life during the years the American colonies were fighting for independence. The coming of peace in 1783 brought renewed prospects of internal development, and the infant colony on the Cumberland began to recruit its strength. It was in this year that North Carolina enacted her sweeping provisions for the disposal of western lands, and surveyors and speculators began to swarm into the New World Canaan.

According to the statutes of 1783, it was provided that a reservation of six hundred forty acres should be made about the salt lick where Robertson had built his station on the bluff overlooking the Cumberland. This survey was made, not in the form of a square, but in the shape of a long rectangular plat, running roughly parallel to the brink of the river. The lick lay near its northern end; the bluff fort lay near its center; to the south it crossed low ground and ascended an elevation lying opposite the bluff. In 1784 an act was passed providing that two hundred acres of this tract situated on the bluff and including the fort should be marked off for a town site.¹ The name Nashborough originally given to the settle-

¹ *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 616-17; Putnam, p. 213; M. B. Howell, "First Streets of Nashville," *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 179-89.

ment was now changed to Nashville. This was the founding of the city.

A board of commissioners was appointed by the North Carolina assembly to survey the town, dispose of the lots, and act as the governing body of the new village. During the previous year North Carolina had created Davidson County in order to provide government for those lands lying west of the Cumberlands.² Nashville was now made the seat of justice for this jurisdiction. The surveyors provided a public square on the crest of the bluff near the river front, and a checkerboard street-plan was arranged about this civic center.³ One of the early travelers who visited Nashville thought that he saw here the prototype of those many southwestern towns where the courthouse occupied a central square encircled by the business district. The commercial ambitions of the community were symbolized by giving Philadelphia names to the streets of this outpost of civilization.

A one-room courthouse of logs was erected in the public square, along with a log jail and a pillory.⁴ The stockade of the old fort was torn down and the cabins which had been enclosed by this fortification became the principal group of dwellings.⁵ Yet the Indians still menaced the settlement no less than before, and a new stockade was erected to include the whole of the town site. Thus a fortified village of logs came into being in place of the old fort.⁶

² *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 540; Putnam, pp. 200-12.

³ See map opposite p. 198 in Clayton's *Davidson County*.

⁴ Tennessee Historical Society MSS. Paper read by A. W. Putnam before the Society and published in Tannehill's *Portfolio* of Aug. and Sept., 1849; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 599-600.

⁵ W. A. Provine, "Lardner Clark, Nashville's First Merchant," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, III, 46-48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48.

Growth was slow during the first few years. In 1785 there were but two houses meriting the name, the rest being the cabins which had constituted the old fort. Two years later there were six houses of log and frame construction in addition to about thirty cabins. This palisaded village of logs on the bluff was surely founded upon a rock, for limestone cropped to the surface of the ground, and cedars grew in profusion. Undulating forests stretched away on every hand, but in many places the trees had been deadened by "girdling," and crops were growing beneath their leafless boughs.⁷

Even in those primitive times a certain amount of trade was carried on with the outside world. Voyageurs from New Orleans, Vincennes, and Detroit had traded at the "French Lick" before Robertson made his settlement there, and they continued to carry on their traffic in furs and spirits for some years after the establishment of the fort on the bluff. This commerce was plied along the rivers in canoes and pirogues just as it was conducted with the Indians of the forest throughout the Mississippi Valley.

There is some uncertainty as to the date of the opening of the first mercantile establishment in Nashville. One author states that James Wilkinson set up a dry goods store in Kentucky in 1783 and that Nashville secured supplies from him at that date.⁸ Another writer avers that Lardner Clark opened his shop in Nashville during that year, whereas other authorities have usually given 1786 as the date of this event.⁹ At any rate, Clark is known to have been the first local merchant. He built one of the earliest two-story houses in the town and carried on the mercantile and the tavern business under

⁷ Putnam, p. 384.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁹ "Lardner Clark," *loc. cit.*, p. 123.

the same roof. His time was partly taken up also with the duties of a justice of the peace. The goods for his trading-house were packed on horses and brought out along the trail which Robertson had followed in 1779.¹⁰

No wheeled vehicles were to be seen in the community until the first road was opened from East Tennessee in 1788.¹¹ It was in this year and along this road that Andrew Jackson and John McNairy came to Nashville. Other men of more prominence were coming during the same period. The Lewises, the Armstrongs, the Overtons, and Griffith Rutherford¹² were conspicuous among these. One of the most picturesque of the early characters was James Cole Montfourence, who came out to purchase lands for Governor Davie of North Carolina. He mixed in local politics and lent tone to local society by giving lavish dinners and parties, with bear meat, fiddling, and dancing.¹³

In 1785 Robertson secured the incorporation of Davidson Academy and succeeded in enlisting the services of the Reverend Thomas B. Craighead, son of Alexander Craighead of Mecklenburg fame and a product of Nassau Hall, to found the institution. In 1786 the sturdy Presbyterian pioneer built his church and schoolhouse at Spring Hill, near Nashville, and became the first clergyman of the community.¹⁴ The first physician reached the settlement in 1785¹⁵ and the first lawyer came out the next year.¹⁶

By 1792 Nashville could boast of two taverns—the Nashville Inn and the Talbot Hotel—one distillery, the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 42; Clayton, p. 197.

¹¹ *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 319.

¹² *Knoxville Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1792.

¹³ Putnam, p. 292.

¹⁴ J. M. Bass, "Rev. Thomas Craighead," *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 88-96; McFerrin, I, 36-37; Putnam, 234-35; *S. R. N. C.*, XXIV, 751-52.

¹⁵ Putnam, p. 242.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

famous "Red Heifer," one dry goods shop—that of Clark—and one blacksmith shop.¹⁷

When the quarrel with Spain was settled by Pinckney's treaty of 1795 and the Indians consequently ceased their constant depredations, the Cumberland country went on a boom which lasted until the clouds presaging the War of 1812 began to lower.¹⁸ It was in the year of the treaty that Blount secured the opening of a good wagon road to the Cumberland. A contemporary said that on many parts of this highway the immigrants could scarcely pass each other for the crowd, and that the ferry boats operated day and night. He alleged that in the course of two months over twenty-six thousand souls had crossed the Cumberland at one place, and that there were occasions when from one to two thousand persons were traveling through the wilderness at the same time.¹⁹ The stockades could now be abandoned, and throngs of settlers, rich and poor, continued to pour westward year after year. As a result of this migration, Nashville began to shed the appearance of a frontier post and to take on the attributes of civilization. In 1796 a visitor to the infant town observed two coaches fitted out in all the state of a Philadelphia equipage, and also a number of carriages.²⁰ By this time the first brick house had been erected,²¹ and shortly the settlement came to number from sixty to eighty families, most of them engaged in some manner of trade.²² In 1797 mail service was extended from Knoxville, and a postoffice

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 515-16, 527, 537.

¹⁹ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., IV, 42/12, 42/14, excerpts from the papers of Willie Blount; F. A. Michaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62; Putnam, p. 571.

²⁰ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 117.

²¹ Putnam, pp. 293, 399, 535.

²² J. Woolridge (ed.), *History of Nashville*, p. 94; *American Historical Magazine*, V, 117.

established.²³ This development was doubtless responsible for the founding of the first local newspaper, the Tennessee *Gazette*, during the same year.²⁴ In 1796 the Methodists built a log church on the public square near the courthouse.²⁵ By 1799 the Presbyterians, who constituted the most important religious group among the early settlers, had built a pretentious stone house of worship,²⁶ but in 1800 it still lacked flooring, interior finish, and window glass.²⁷ This was apparently the first stone building of which the town could boast.

The hunting era was being succeeded by the agricultural, and the old frontier trade in furs, liquors, and flint-locks was being supplanted by a trade in the products of the fields, and in dry goods and hardware. With the agricultural development well under way, cotton and tobacco came into prominence. This meant a complete revolution in methods of trade. By 1795 the keel boat, the barge, and the flat boat were being used in place of the pirogue and the canoe on the waters of the Cumberland. A keel boat was usually about fifty feet long, sharp pointed fore and aft, with a narrow deck extending all around her, inside the gunwales. A cabin was built inside this deck, and might extend only part way or the total length of the boat. In the latter case the keel boat was called a "barge."²⁸ Such a craft was usually poled up stream, the narrow deck being traversed from stem to stern by the polesmen as they made their toilsome way against the current. Oars and sails were sometimes used to assist in the ascent.²⁹

²³ Hale and Merritt, p. 424.

²⁴ Moore and Foster, I, 293.

²⁵ Clayton, p. 197.

²⁶ Report of Steiner and Schweinitz, *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country*, p. 508.

²⁷ *Journal of Francis Asbury*, II, 476.

²⁸ Putnam, p. 62.

²⁹ Woolridge, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

Twenty miles a day was about as much as could be made by such means of locomotion.³⁰ The state seal of Tennessee bears the image of one of these boats, equipped with a sail.

A flat boat was merely a huge floating box. Whereas a keel boat might carry twenty or thirty tons, a flat boat could carry two or three hundred. It was built of heavy boards, with a flat bottom and a rectangular shape. It was often covered with a roof. Such a craft was not intended to ascend streams, but was used to float cargoes down to port, being broken up and sold for lumber at its destination. The boatmen who went down the western waters to New Orleans in this way would return through the Indian country over the Natchez Trace, Nashville being the first white settlement on their journey from the lower Mississippi.

Though goods were still brought from the East by wagon as late as 1795, the freight rate being ten dollars the hundred pounds,³¹ this traffic was on the wane. The treaty with Spain opened the Mississippi to our trade and Nashville began to send her produce down the river to New Orleans and to receive her supplies from Philadelphia by way of Pittsburgh, and the Ohio and Cumberland rivers. A regular commerce of this nature now sprang up. The first boat-loads of goods sent down the river contained lime, bacon, bar and cast iron, and whiskey—"the productions of the country."³² By 1800 cotton was rapidly forging ahead to supplant other

³⁰ F. A. Michaux, p. 252.

³¹ J. H. DeWitt, "General James Winchester," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 82-83; D. L. McMurtry, "The Indian Policy of the Federal Government," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 108; Clayton, pp. 212-13; Putnam, pp. 413-14.

³² *Knoxville Gazette*, June 19, 1795; Clayton, p. 203. There is an interesting journal of a boat trip from Nashville to Natchez in 1807.—*Tennessee Historical Magazine*, V, 48 ff.

products of the Cumberland basin,³³ with tobacco occupying second place. Gins are mentioned as having been used here as early as 1799.³⁴ The staple was much in demand for home consumption in the back country as well as for export to New Orleans after 1803.³⁵

The producers of cotton did not ship their own crops to market, but disposed of them to the local merchants who rapidly increased in numbers and importance.³⁶ The business of these men was complicated and profitable. They operated the early gins,³⁷ owned warehouses, kept shop, and ran boats on the river for export and import purposes. They could buy their goods on credit from the eastern merchants,³⁸ sell on credit to their local customers, and take their pay when the cotton crop matured.³⁹ Cash was always scarce, and most of their business was done by trade and barter. They would take peltry, or cotton, or a Negro for their sugar and calico and imported liqueurs.⁴⁰ As the scale of their operations increased, they began to use drafts or bills of exchange whereby credits could be transferred from one part of the country to another;⁴¹ and shortly afterward banks became necessary in the West.

The economic prosperity which followed in the wake of these commercial developments caused Nashville to

³³ Report of Steiner and Schweinitz, *loc. cit.*, p. 512; F. A. Michaux, pp. 276-77; Putnam, p. 291.

³⁴ Report of Steiner and Schweinitz, *loc. cit.*, p. 516.

³⁵ F. A. Michaux, p. 252.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252; Clayton, pp. 199-200, 203.

³⁷ *Impartial Review*, Oct. 11, Nov. 22, 1806, advertisements.

³⁸ Roosevelt, III, pt. 1, 250-51.

³⁹ *Impartial Review*, Feb. 1, 8, Nov. 29, 1806, May 23, 1807, advertisements.

⁴⁰ Even taxes were often paid in kind.—Ramsey, p. 504; Putnam, p. 320. Advertisements in early newspapers give interesting information on this subject.—*Knoxville Gazette*, Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 24, May 19, July 14, 1792.

⁴¹ *Impartial Review*, Nov. 1, 11, 22, 1806.

flourish not a little. Brick and frame structures were taking the place of the old log cabins. Business houses were beginning to cluster about the public square and a brick market-house was erected. Comfortable residences were appearing here and there. John McNairy, now judge of the Federal court, built a handsome home where he maintained considerable state, as did some of the men who lived in the surrounding country. Among the more prominent of these were General James Winchester at his home "Cragfont," on the road near Bledsoe's Lick, and General Daniel Smith at his home "Rock Castle," a bit farther east along the same road, which led to Knoxville. Another conspicuous citizen was John Buchanan, son-in-law of Colonel James Patton, the Virginia land speculator. He had come out with Robertson when the settlement was first established. Southwestern Virginia, whence came also Daniel Smith, the Winchesters, the Donelsons, the Overtons, and so many of the leading pioneers, was his home, and he was a man of influence in this group. Four miles from town he established a "station" and built a mill on Mill Creek.⁴² Hither the barefoot boys of the neighborhood would come on horseback, bringing their sacks of corn to be ground.

Beyond Mill Creek the road ran eastward to Clover Bottom on Stone River. Here a broad expanse of low land bordered the stream, and here Colonel John Donelson had planted his first crop in 1780. A race course was now laid out on this ground, and Andrew Jackson and his friends and enemies frequented the place to indulge in their favorite sport. Not far beyond

⁴² "The Early History of the Southwest, Narrative of John Rains," *South-Western Monthly*, II, 263; Clayton, p. 73.

the river lay the Hermitage estate, and near it the Donelson connection owned much land. This was the richest community in the neighborhood of Nashville, and several of the leading citizens lived near by. Among them were the brothers Joel and William Terrell Lewis. The latter was the father of daughters who married Alfred Balch, Dr. Thomas Claiborne, Governor W. C. C. Claiborne, John H. Eaton, and William B. Lewis, thus binding these men by ties other than political intrigue. On the death of W. T. Lewis, his son-in-law, William B. Lewis,⁴³ came into possession of his home. It was here that Andrew Jackson visited him as a neighbor and became his intimate friend. Another of the neighbors was Colonel Robert Hays, who was brother-in-law to Jackson, having married a daughter of Colonel John Donelson. Hays was not only a prominent and wealthy pioneer, but a close friend and associate of the more wealthy and prominent land speculators, William Polk and William Blount.⁴⁴ It is interesting to observe to how great extent were the men who governed the destinies of the country bound by ties of blood and friendship.

The rich land was so largely taken up by rich men in the region, that poor men were often reduced to the necessity of renting farms at fifteen bushels of corn per acre. Good land near the settlement was worth four to six dollars the acre during this period.⁴⁵

Some light is thrown on the early government of Nashville by the record of a meeting of the board of

⁴³ Draper Papers, Virginia MSS., VIII, 66, Wm. T. Lewis to Draper, Dec. 10, 1881; Clayton, 72 ff.

⁴⁴ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., VI, 10, S. J. Hays to L. C. Draper, Aug. 16 1845; Putnam, p. 490; André Michaux, p. 93, Feb. 16, 1796.

⁴⁵ Putnam, pp. 642-43.

commissioners which was held in 1802. They assembled at the house of Timothy Demonbreun and elected Robert C. Foster to preside as "Intendant." All the members except the Intendant were required to uncover on taking their seats. The executive officer of the community was the town sergeant. Numerous police regulations were adopted, most of which dealt with the problems of loitering slaves and stray hogs.⁴⁶ In 1804 the town numbered about four hundred inhabitants.⁴⁷ In 1806 it was incorporated by the legislature of Tennessee, and a mayor and council were then elected.⁴⁸

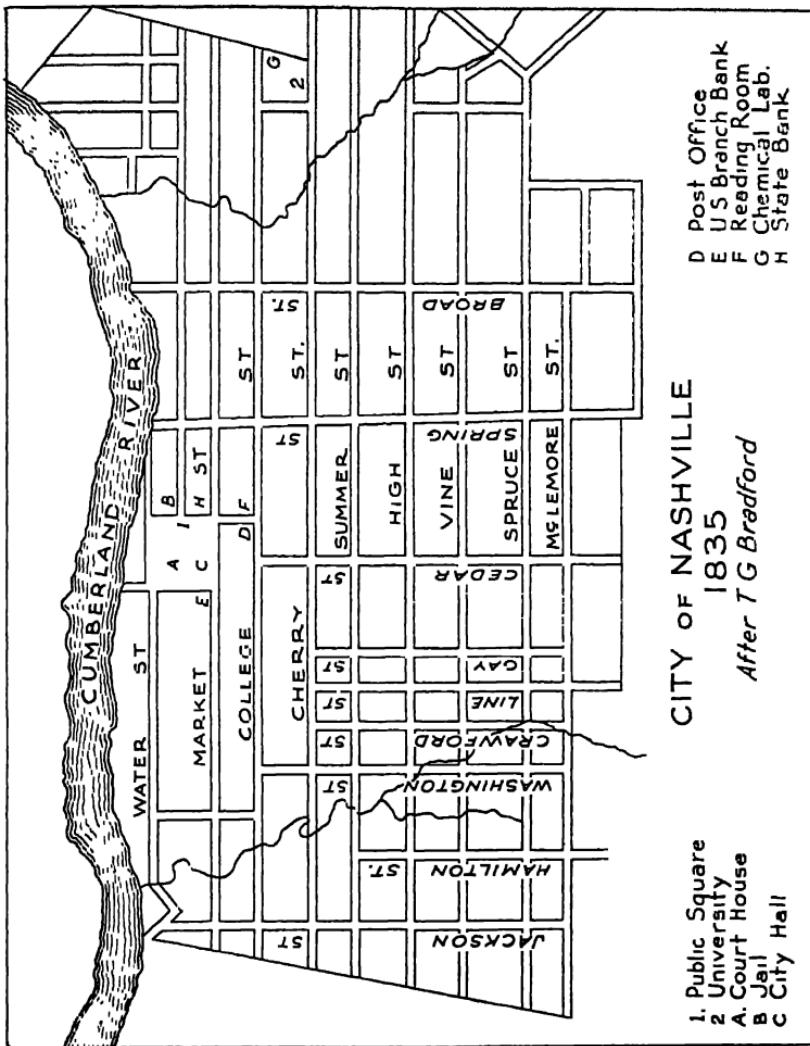
Civic improvement continued steadily in spite of the Embargo of 1807 and the severe blow which it struck at American commerce. The old Davidson Academy was rechartered as Cumberland College in 1806. In 1785 this institution had been granted the two hundred forty acres of land lying south of Nashville in the old French Lick survey. The tract was situated on the elevation opposite the bluff, and here the construction of a college plant was undertaken. The government, as one feature of the land settlement of 1806, granted fifty thousand acres to the college. The failure of the legislature to permit the institution to realize on this grant is merely one chapter in the story of the spoliation of education by the politicians of the period. In 1809 Dr. James Priestly succeeded the Reverend Thomas B. Craighead as president, and the fight for existence was kept up under his leadership. The buildings of the old Vanderbilt Medical School still mark the location of this ancient seat of learning.

⁴⁶ Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Records of the Board of Commissioners.

⁴⁷ E. Morris (ed.), *The Tennessee Gazetteer or Topographical Directory*, p. 109.

⁴⁸ Clayton, p. 198.

A jockey club now operated the race course at Clover Bottom,⁴⁹ and in 1807 John Overton took a



leading part in the organization of a fire company.⁵⁰ In 1806 Bishop Asbury found the place greatly improved

Impartial Review, March 15, April 12, 1806.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, May 16, 1807.

since 1800. He noticed several valuable houses, an elegant courthouse, and the college.⁵¹ By 1809 the growing town could boast of three newspapers; the *Clarion*, successor to the old *Gazette*, the *Impartial Review*, and the *Whig*.⁵² There were now three hostellries on the public aquare: the Bell Tavern, the Nashville Inn, and the Talbot Hotel. The first two of these were destined to play a large part in the expanding life of the community.

In 1800 the mail route had been extended from Nashville along the Natchez Trace to the lower Mississippi,⁵³ and the following year a treaty was made with the Indians which provided for the clearing of a road along the route.⁵⁴ The actual work was not undertaken until 1806 when James Robertson applied for the contract at a price ranging from eight to eleven dollars a mile.⁵⁵ He failed to secure the contract, but proposed to take it over from his successful competitor at four to seven dollars per mile.⁵⁶ He must have made terms on this basis, for the work was completed by him in 1809.⁵⁷ The mail service was gradually improved along this road, and it came in time to be one of the most important in the United States.⁵⁸

In 1807 Indian treaties were made which provided for the opening of a road from the Nashville settlement to connect with the road from East Tennessee to Georgia. Another was to connect Nashville with the waters of the Tombigbee, thus providing an outlet to the Gulf at

⁵¹ *Journal of Francis Asbury*, III, 251-52.

⁵² Clayton, p. 199.

⁵³ J. P. Bretz, "Early Land Communication with the Lower Mississippi Valley," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIII, 4-5.

⁵⁴ McMurry, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁵⁵ *Impartial Review*, Oct. 18, 1806.

⁵⁶ "Robertson Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, V, 187-89, 253.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 252-53, 257-58; Putnam, p. 583.

⁵⁸ Bretz, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Mobile.⁵⁹ These routes were developed in due time, and they typify the expanding commercial interests of the Cumberland country.

Manufacturing was meanwhile growing up on a small scale. Important in the life of any western town were the craftsmen, for many articles were then made locally which now would be imported. The millers, the tanners, and the distillers were always among the pioneers, and Nashville had her early representatives in these trades.⁶⁰ Blacksmiths were also among the first, and soon tailors and cobblers joined them. Tin and coppersmiths, makers of stills, saddlers, hatters, and cabinet-makers came as the commercial life of the community grew more active.⁶¹ The number of craftsmen usually amounted to about 10 per cent of the population of the average town, and they constituted an important element among the people. However, social conditions were never favorable for them in country where slavery existed, and it was often hard to find competent workmen.⁶² When General James Winchester built his stone house, "Cragfont," near Gallatin, where it still stands, he had to import workmen from Baltimore to do the interior finishing.⁶³ Often slaves were trained to do the work of craftsmen for their masters. Almost nothing in the way of a real manufacturing plant existed on the frontier at this time although around 1795 iron works were established in the country west of Nashville,⁶⁴ and as early as 1791 there

⁵⁹ "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, V, 167-69; Putnam, p. 571.

⁶⁰ Putnam, p. 284.

⁶¹ *Knoxville Gazette*, Jan. 14, Feb. 25, June 16, Oct. 6, 1792, June 5, 1795; Clayton, pp. 197-99.

⁶² R. A. Halley, "Paper Making in Tennessee," *American Historical Magazine*, IX, 211-17.

⁶³ DeWitt, "James Winchester," *loc. cit.*, p. 84.

⁶⁴ Williams, *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country*, p. 517; Holt, *op. cit.*, p. 37. Blount

was a cotton spinning and weaving plant at Manchester.⁶⁵

Slaves had been brought out by Robertson and the earliest settlers and figured in the life of the frontier stations.⁶⁶ As agricultural operations increased, their numbers increased accordingly. A traveler in 1802 reported that the plantations along the Knoxville road as far east as the Cumberland crossing at Cairo were within a mile or two of each other. Aside from the more elaborate establishments of Smith and Winchester, the planters were said to live comfortably in good log houses, and, in most cases, to own slaves.⁶⁷ In 1795 the slave population of Middle Tennessee was more than 20 per cent of the whole, whereas in East Tennessee it was not more than 12 1/2 per cent.⁶⁸

The cost of living during this period was cheap or high according as one used or did not use imported articles. The county court fixed the rate to be charged at the taverns, and dinners cost two shillings, with breakfast and supper at one shilling six pence, the shilling being worth about twelve and a half cents at that time.⁶⁹ Whiskey cost six pence the half-pint. Travelers generally complained of the highness of these rates, one of them laying the blame upon the speculative tendency in western life.⁷⁰ Iron sold for ten cents a pound; domestic flour brought three dollars the barrel,

always had a keen interest in the development of iron works, and this is not to be wondered at with iron at ten cents the pound. He seems to have had some connection with Col. King, who operated the iron works near Knoxville, and it appears that Robertson, at his instance, backed this Middle Tennessee venture. Presently the works were taken over by Montgomery Bell.

⁶⁵ *Knoxville Gazetteer*, Dec. 17, 1791.

⁶⁶ Hale and Merritt, pp. 292-93.

⁶⁷ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 100-4.

⁶⁸ O. P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, p. 83; Goodspeed, p. 211.

⁶⁹ Provine, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Putnam, p. 284.

⁷⁰ *Knoxville Gazette*, Dec. 29, 1792; *American Historical Magazine*, V, 100-4.

but the "imported" brand was worth eight. During this period of rapid immigration, corn ordinarily worth twenty-five cents sold for a dollar a bushel, and whiskey would bring seventy-five cents or a dollar per gallon. Beaverskins were worth a dollar a pound, deerskins sixteen cents, and cotton, ginned and baled, was quoted at seventeen cents. Beef and pork sold at three cents a pound, rice and lard at nine, beeswax at twenty-five cents, candles at eighteen and a half cents, and salt at two dollars a bushel.⁷¹

The life of West Tennessee thus developed along different lines from those prevailing in the eastern part of the state. The great fertility of the Cumberland basin attracted wealthy investors and speculators, and the best parts of the country were taken up by such men. Only about one-eighth of the adult whites were land-owners in 1787.⁷² The poor farmer had to go into the back country or become dependent on the wealthy landlord. The society which grew up under these conditions, though much affected by the circumstances of the frontier, tended gradually to model itself upon the pattern set in old Virginia and the Carolinas. This was not an atmosphere especially conducive to the development of democratic institutions.

⁷¹ *Impartial Review*, Nov. 29, 1806; "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, IV, 277; Holt, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁷² Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box N 1, No. 6.

CHAPTER XIII

FRONTIER RELIGION

THE MOST important religious influences present in the southern commonwealths during the Revolutionary period were the Anglicanism of the tidewater regions and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism of the western valleys. Eighteenth-century rationalism had for some time been making headway among the intelligentsia against the faltering Anglicanism of the older settlements, but its adherents were more influential than they were numerous. The Methodists and Baptists were slowly gaining converts among the poorer elements of the back country, but the field was far too large for the workers. These people of the back country had, in some cases, lived for generations out of touch with civilization. They were impoverished and ignorant, and religion had ceased to be a vital force in their lives. Only an emotional appeal could move them and there was, up to this time, no organization in America with sufficient missionary zeal and power to penetrate the wilderness and reach them in large numbers.

When the western country was settled, its religious status was influenced by all these factors except Anglicanism. Since the pioneers were so largely of the Scotch-Irish element, Presbyterianism was the leading religious force in the West of the early years. The Presbyterian was, in fact, the only denomination in the South which maintained a vigorous life during the Revolutionary period. Its intelligent and aggressive anti-Erastian

leaders played a conspicuous part in lining up the West with the Whig cause during the struggle, as was illustrated by the Mecklenburg "declaration" of 1775. Their aggressive spirit was further brought out by their fight for religious qualifications for voting and office-holding in the North Carolina constitutional convention of 1776 and the Tennessee convention of 1796.¹

The important part which they took in the early educational development of Tennessee has already been noted. Until the dawn of the nineteenth century, they had more clergymen, more churches, and more adherents than any other sect in this region,² but they were not without competitors.

The first Baptist preacher, Tidence Lane, reached the Holston settlements in 1779,³ and the first Methodist, Jeremiah Lambert, arrived in 1783.⁴ The first Methodist, Benjamin Ogden, preached in the Cumberland settlements in 1786 or 1787.⁵ From that time forward both Methodists and Baptists were active in this area.⁶ The former, in their circuit riders, had the most efficient instrument ever devised for bringing religion to the scattered population of the frontier, and in their episcopal organization they had a centralized administration capable of giving effective direction to the efforts of these young, unmarried zealots who rode with their saddle-bags through the devious ways of the forest and labored for the Lord at eighty dollars a year, if they could get it.⁷

The Methodists, along with their insistence on

¹ There was also a struggle of this nature during the first session of the Tennessee legislature in 1796.—Ramsey, p. 663.

² Williams, *Franklin*, p. 265.

⁴ McFerrin, I, 28-29.

⁶ Hale and Merritt, pp. 420-21.

³ Ramsey, p. 182.

⁵ Putnam, p. 282; McFerrin, I, 36-37.

⁷ Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography*, p. 63.

unworldliness, have been inclined from their early days to resort to an emotional appeal to reach the simple of mind.⁸ Their belief in free-will might have been expected to inspire in them an evangelical zeal which would enable them to forge ahead of the predestinarians in the competition for converts in new country. In spite of this, they did not increase rapidly in the West before 1800.⁹ Bishop Asbury conscientiously plodded his weary way among the barbarities of the back country, and stimulated the people as little as they stimulated him.¹⁰ If ever there was a voice crying in the wilderness, it was his.

Suddenly a light broke out of the darkness, but Asbury was not present. It all came about in a most unexpected and peculiar way. There was a certain James McGready, a Presbyterian, who had charge of a church at Red River, Kentucky. There he had labored for several years, but his ministry had caused no great stir. It transpired during the year 1799 that the Reverend Mr. McGready was holding a "sacramental solemnity" at his church. A sacramental solemnity was a "protracted meeting" lasting throughout several days. A number of visiting Presbyterian clergymen, including the Reverend Messrs. Hodge and Rankin, were assisting on this occasion. Now it came to pass that two other clergymen appeared upon the scene, apparently without invitation. These were the brothers William and John McGee, of Sumner County, Tennessee. It so happened that William was a Presbyterian, and John, strange though it may seem, a Methodist.

⁸ McFerrin, I, 355-56; *Journal of Francis Asbury*, I, 157-73.

⁹ McFerrin, I, 188, 217, 259-60, 335.

¹⁰ *Journal of Francis Asbury*, II, 69-77, 159-62, 248-53; McFerrin, I, 377.

On the last day of the meeting while Mr. Hodge was preaching, with these two strangers in his congregation, a woman in the east end of the church, who had doubtless come under Methodist influence, began to shout. When the sermon was over, all the clergymen withdrew except the McGee brothers, and the congregation remained to see what would happen. The woman in the east end of the church again began to shout, and John McGee hesitated between his Methodist inclinations and his Presbyterian surroundings. He knew that his absent hosts would be opposed to such disorder, but his inclinations won the victory and he went among the congregation exhorting. The shouting became general and "many souls were saved."¹¹

It was at this same meeting that one man attended who did not have enough horses for his entire family to ride. He therefore stocked his wagon with provisions and camped on the grounds during the continuance of the exercises. Thus, on one and the same occasion, the two essential features of the camp meeting sprang into existence by mere chance. Yet there was nothing new in the methods of the Methodists. It would seem that this sect had not previously been able to get together sufficient members on the frontier to generate the requisite amount of enthusiasm. It was only when they thus happened to take over a Presbyterian congregation that they had opportunity to practise their mob psychology with telling effect.

¹¹ The account followed here is that of John McGee himself, which is to be found in McFerrin, I, 291. There are several other versions. See Goodspeed, pp. 649 ff., and Phelan, pp. 222 ff. For McGready's account, see W. H. Foote, *Sketches of North Carolina*, pp. 371 ff. Here the date of the Red River meeting is given as June, 1800. Catharine Cleveland, in her *Great Revival in the West*, follows McGready's account. She does not seem to have made use of that of McGee. See pp. 56-57.

The movement spread like wildfire throughout the West, and even into the East. Permanent camps for such meetings grew up on an elaborate scale. A suitable place in the neighborhood of a spring of water would be selected. The trees would be felled and benches placed upon the ground for a large congregation. A shelter would be constructed over the seats, and at one end would be placed a rude bench to serve as a pulpit. In front of this was the "altar," a rectangular space enclosed by a rail and provided with seats. This was the "mourner's bench" where the penitents were invited to assemble after the sermon or exhortation. The ground all about was strewn with straw, and camps or cabins were erected in the neighborhood for the accommodation of the worshippers. A meeting would last for days, and several preachers ministered to a congregation who, out of the terrible loneliness of the wilderness, were avid for companionship, and collected from all the surrounding country. When loneliness became all but unendurable, the conscience of the frontiersman would not often permit him to drop his work for several days merely to seek out his neighbors in the far reaches of their forest homes. But meeting with them to worship the Lord was another thing. It was not only justifiable in his eyes, it was commendable. When the trumpet call to worship sounded, there were few in the wilderness who failed to heed it.

The usual procedure was for a trumpet to be blown at daylight. Then a second blast called to silent prayer in the tents. A third blast was blown as a call to public prayer on the grounds. Breakfast was served in the tents, and at eight o'clock the first service began. Other services were held at eleven o'clock, three o'clock, and

early candle light. Each service was of the same general nature. First a sermon was preached, and then an exhorter would call the sinners to repentance. There being many sinners on the frontier, there were usually many penitents. They would collect at the mourner's bench and workers would strive with them, laying their sins heavily upon them. This was called a "class." Between the long sermon, the exhortation, and the "class," it is difficult to see how the eight o'clock service was finished in time to make way for that at eleven. The same clergyman did not have to preach at every service, but the same congregation had to go through it all. The capacity of those hardy pioneers for religious instruction must have been well-nigh inexhaustible. Singing was an essential part of the program, and leaders were appointed to conduct it.¹² Shouting was a feature of these meetings from the very first, and during the excitement men and women would often fall down in a trance. Presently a new exercise known as the "jerks" was added. The victim appeared to have no control over his motions, and his head would be snatched back and forth at a rapid rate. Says Peter Cartwright, the backwoods preacher:

To see those proud young gentlemen and young ladies, dressed in their silks, jewelry, and prunella, from top to toe, take the *jerks*, would often excite my risibilities. The first jerk or so, you would see their fine bonnets, caps, and combs fly; and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a wagoner's whip.¹³

This affected saints and sinners alike, and in order to avoid it they would often dance or run or pray. But the more they resisted it, the harder they jerked.¹⁴ Barking

¹² McFerrin, I, 337-39.

¹³ *Autobiography*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

exercises, during which the victim would bark like a dog, was another strange manifestation of this period of religious excitement.¹⁵ Sometimes, also, men and women in trances would see visions. Some claimed divine authority for their visions, and Shakerism and other such movements grew out of this phase of the Great Revival. At this point the Methodists came to feel that the matter could be carried too far, and they began to discourage the more violent of the manifestations.¹⁶

Nevertheless, it was in the super-charged atmosphere of the evening meetings, when the strident tones of the evangelist rang through the straw-strewn pavilion and died away in the echoes of the dark and silent forest, that the ministry of the Methodists was most fruitful. And it was among the young and impressionable that the greatest number of converts was made. It was not theological abstractions nor yet the simple gospel of love with which these itinerant Samsons slew their tens of thousands. It was with the fire of Hell and the vengeance of God that they accomplished it.

The Presbyterians, caught unexpectedly in this vortex, were carried along as by the force of rushing waters. For the time being they coöperated in the meetings with the Methodists and adopted their methods. An agreement to avoid proselyting was arranged, and harmony was maintained until about 1804.¹⁷ Then the force of the movement began to wane as the abuses of emotionalism began to grow more apparent. Then, also, dissensions began to break out between the two denominations and within the ranks of each, but the Presbyterians were most vitally affected.

The Cumberland Presbytery had gone over enthu-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

¹⁷ McFerrin, I, 46 ff; II, 79, 84.

siastically to the new movement and had licensed to preach a number of young men who did not meet the previously established educational qualifications of the denomination. For this, at the instance of the Reverend Thomas B. Craighead and others, the erring presbytery was brought, in 1804, under censure of the Synod of Kentucky. Finally, in 1810, after several years of dissension over the question, the Tennessee Presbytery, led by William McGee and others, seceded from the organization and formed the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The new body renounced the doctrine of predestination, but retained a belief in the "perseverance of the saints." It retained also the evangelical tendencies acquired during the Revival, and it provided that candidates for its ministry should be examined in no language other than English.¹⁸ Thus did the Great Revival shake to its foundations the religious structure of the West.

The Baptists took little part in this movement. Their time was to come later.¹⁹ But Methodism became a powerful factor in the religious life of the country when John McGee arose to preach at Red River on that fateful day in 1799. The numbers of this sect, which had increased but slowly up to that time, began to mount rapidly and continued to do so even after the high tide of the Revival was over. In fact, in a very real sense, the Revival was never over, for the itinerants continued year after year to ride through the country, and the camp meeting became a permanent institution. The townspeople might scoff at its crudities, but it never lost its

¹⁸ Goodspeed, pp. 658-61; Moore and Foster, I, 333; McFerrin, II, 77-79, quoting *Autobiography of Jacob Young*; *Ibid.*, I, 341; Cartwright, pp. 46-47.

¹⁹ Goodspeed, p. 691; Cartwright, p. 48.

appeal for the rural folk, and the numbers of converts grew from year to year. Nor did other denominations fail to profit from the increased religious activity.

This manifestation of religious enthusiasm among a people who had not previously shown any great religious interest is one of the strange chapters in the history of the West. The poor backwoodsmen who were most deeply affected by the movement were, of all people, among the most unimaginative and phlegmatic. In many cases they were barely more than half-civilized, and the churchmen would certainly have said that they were hardened in their sin. It was indeed no promising material for the shepherd of the Lord. Why then did they fall so easily under the influence of the camp meeting? It would seem to have been a matter of mass psychology. In their isolated cabins they were starved for social intercourse and welcomed any congregation as a break in the monotony of life. Get such ignorant, superstitious people together, especially the youth; surround them with many others in a strange environment, and frighten them out of their wits with tales of Hell and the Devil and the awful punishments awaiting them hereafter; thunder at them with all the stentorian verbosity of the primitive evangelist, and they listen in awed stupefaction until their nerves fail. The demonstrations of the camp meeting were not so much a product of emotionalism as of emotional collapse, carefully worked up and brought on by the fury of the preachers. Without the element of hysteria, the camp meeting would have been a failure.

Out of this there grew a new West and a new South. Presently the country was full of "professors," as those who had professed religion and joined the church were called. Before 1860 it was not taken for granted that a

man was affiliated with some church. One was definitely stamped as a "professor" or a "non-professor,"²⁰ and his place in society was somewhat affected by his status in this respect. The early Methodists were inclined to oppose slavery, ostentatious dress, and the pleasures of the flesh such as card-playing, dancing, and theatre-going,²¹ and around 1830 they began to wage war against drink.²² But the backwoodsmen were fond of their fiddles and their whiskey; the townsmen clung to their dances and their cards.

The evangelists were more successful among the poor and ignorant than among the wealthy and educated, though in the towns the Presbyterians held their own with a more dignified form of religion. When the Methodists set themselves up in the towns, they changed their ways to some extent. For instance, the Reverend Mr. Bascom, a famous Methodist evangelist, appeared in Nashville in 1809 and was the first clergyman of that sect to be seen smoking a cigar and wearing a fashionable frock-coat. It is said that he used such long words that ladies carried their pocket dictionaries to church with them.²³ Gradually the southern Methodists gave ground also on the slavery question.

It is safe to assert that the churches did not control public opinion in the South prior to 1860. The planters and the lawyers—the educated classes—though formal Episcopalians in many cases, were inoculated with the skepticism or indifference which came down from the eighteenth century, and a man could not be a "gentleman" under the "code duello" and the decanter, and a

²⁰ Ramsey, pp. 710-11; Clayton, p. 207.

²¹ McFerrin, II, 130-31; III, 160-61, 270-71.

²² Clayton, p. 201.

²³ *Ibid.*, III, 424-25, 439.

pious church member at the same time. The inconsistency would have been noticed in the time of Andrew Jackson, who did not join the church until long after his hectic fighting days were over.

It was probably Grant who helped the evangelicals to conquer the South. The old gentry was overthrown, and the masses rose up to take the vacated place. The Methodists had all along tended to increase in numbers most rapidly during years of adversity,²⁴ and the reconstruction period furnished a full meed of that persuader. Other denominations were likewise affected. At any rate, the situation has changed radically since 1860. The evangelicals have won the field and lost their theology.

²⁴ *McFerrin, III, 461, 480-81, 515-16.*

CHAPTER XIV

THE WAR, THE BOOM, AND THE PANIC

THE YEARS from 1806 to 1819, during which the nation went through its second conflict with Great Britain, were years of relative prosperity in Tennessee. When Sevier completed his second series of three administrations as governor in 1809, he became a candidate for the United States Senate but was defeated.¹ He was then elected to the state senate and in 1811 was sent to the Federal House of Representatives.² These facts show, as was shown by the land fraud controversy of 1803, that his strength lay with the people of East Tennessee rather than with the politicians of the state. The old Blount influence was still strong among the latter, and Willie of that name, with little opposition, succeeded to the governorship for the constitutional maximum of three consecutive terms.³

It has been pointed out that Andrew Jackson, who now held only his major-generalship, had been weakened politically by the Dickinson duel and the Burr incident of 1806. The latter affair had estranged him from the Jefferson administration and caused him to support Monroe rather than Madison for the succession in 1808.⁴ In 1810 he wrote a letter to John Randolph of Roanoke stating that General James Wilkinson, "the once favorite

¹ Moore and Foster, I, 308.

² Phelan, p. 247.

³ It appears that Sevier's influence was thrown to William Cocke in the election of 1809.—*American Historical Magazine*, V, 263-64, Sevier to Robertson, Aug. 6, 1809.

⁴ Bassett, *Jackson*, p. 54; Parton, I, 336; *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 189; *American Historical Magazine*, V, 256-57, Wm. Martin to Jas. Robertson, Jan. 13, 1809.

of presidential care," had been a pensioner of Spain, and asking that Randolph, as the only man in Congress with the necessary courage, expose the traitor.⁵ In fact, Jackson's old congressional friends were principally of that group which, during this period, came to make up the disaffected Republican element known as the *Tertium Quids*.⁶

This was a matter of importance in its relation to Jackson's later career. It has been said that it weakened him locally at the time. Had he been a candidate for office, the truth of this statement would doubtless have been brought out, but from 1804 to 1815 Jackson appears to have had no political ambitions.⁷ He retained his military command probably with the hope that something would some day come of it. He maintained also his close relations with the governor and with the other political leaders of the state. In 1810 he wrote to Willie Blount proposing in the interest of discipline that the militia officers be appointed rather than elected and that the men should be divided into two classes, one to be composed of those between eighteen and twenty-eight, and the other of those between twenty-eight and forty. He suggested that those of the first class be divided into groups and each group given two months' training from time to time.⁸ Nothing came of this proposal, but it was a sound idea and it shows that the man who, as a fledgling lawyer, first called himself to the attention of the governor of the Southwest Territory by his plan for military defense of that frontier, was capable of constructive thinking in at least one field. Without the active

⁵ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 203-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 17, 26, 46-47, 50-54.

⁷ In 1814 he was urged by John Overton to become a candidate for the governorship, but nothing came of it.—*Jackson Correspondence*, II, 1.

⁸ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 201-2.

support of the governor, he could never have conducted his Creek campaign of 1813.⁹

When Blount's third term was over, he was succeeded by Joseph McMinn, who also held the position for three terms, from 1815 to 1821. McMinn was a farmer who had migrated from Pennsylvania and settled in northeast Tennessee. He is remembered principally for his simple habits, it being said that he and his wife were often seen working in the field together.¹⁰ It is notable that he announced his candidacy in 1815 only one month before the election and won over strong opposition by a handsome plurality. His two succeeding elections were even more decisive.¹¹ This would appear to rank him as a real man of the people and mark his administration as an era in primitive democracy. Yet he had long since been a friend to the Blount coterie,¹² and his letters manifest more crudity than simplicity.¹³ His administration was marked by no outburst of reform legislation. Indeed, this whole period was one of political calm and conservatism in Tennessee.

It was also a period of rapid growth and marked prosperity. Between 1790 and 1800 the population increased three-fold—from thirty-five thousand to more than one hundred thousand. Between 1800 and 1810 it increased two and one-half fold. One would not expect to find much economic progress during the troubled years of the embargo from 1807 to 1809. Yet the opening up of new lands with the consequent influx of population

⁹ Draper Papers, Tennessee MSS., V, 57, J. G. M. Ramsey to L. C. Draper, Sept. 9, 1853; *American Historical Magazine*, V, 308-9, "A Patriotic Statute."

¹⁰ Moore and Foster, I, 368.

¹¹ Phelan, pp. 251-52.

¹² "Robertson Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, V, 94, McMinn to Robertson, June 10, 1804.

¹³ "McMinn Correspondence," *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 925-26.

which occurred at this time has already been discussed. That the movement had not died down by 1809 is shown by a letter which Return J. Meigs wrote to James Robertson on June 25 of that year.

I removed 201 families off the Chickasaw lands, and 83 families off the Cherokee lands—not less than 1,700 . . . souls. These people bear the appellation of intruders but they are Americans . . . ; in our new country every man is an acquisition—we ought not to lose a single man for the want of land to work on. A disposition to migrate seems to pervade the whole Eastern part of the U. States; . . . Within seven years stations and settlements will extend to the mouth of the Columbia river.

The 4th of July will be celebrated this year with uncommon satisfaction. The prospect of war has vanished. . . .¹⁴

The very hardships which the embargo imposed upon the commercial and planting classes resulted in the departure of many poor families for the western country.

While the population was thus increasing, the commercial life of the state was also taking on new forms. The Nashville Bank, the first institution of its kind in Tennessee, was chartered in 1807. This was followed by the State Bank of Tennessee, with headquarters at Knoxville, chartered in 1811. Hugh Lawson White became the first president of this institution and served in that capacity as long as it continued to function. His later reputation in the state was based largely upon the fact that he brought the bank through the general suspension of 1814 and the panic of 1819 without failing at any time to pay specie on its obligations.¹⁵

When the war came on, Tennessee was an important military frontier. Her militia was called upon to defend

¹⁴ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 261-62, June 25, 1809.

¹⁵ Phelan, pp. 258-61.

the border, and her resources were required to support the military operations. This brought money into the state and quickened the economic life of the people.¹⁶ Both fame and fortune were beginning to smile upon the rising western community.

Immediately after the war the boom began. The English mills had run short of the staple during the conflict, and consequently the price of cotton soared during the years from 1815 to 1818, reaching thirty-four cents a pound in 1817.¹⁷ Thousands flocked from impoverished eastern lands to take up acreage in the Cumberland basin, and real estate values rose to high levels. The first steamboat docked at Nashville in 1818 and injected a new factor into the buoyant life of the time.¹⁸

Then came the panic. The price of cotton fell with a thud in 1819, and land values slumped with it. The depression crept up the river from New Orleans and enveloped the whole West. So great had been the influx of settlers, and so numerous the purchasers of new lands, that the entire community, merchants and farmers alike, was staggered. It seems likely that a larger proportion of the western population was rendered insolvent than at any other time in the history of the nation.¹⁹ In Tennessee, however, only the western section was seriously affected. The eastern valleys, not being suitable for the culture of cotton, had experienced no inflation. Not sharing in the boom, they consequently escaped the panic in large measure.²⁰

¹⁶ Nashville *Gazette*, Oct 29, 1820.

¹⁷ T. P. Abernethy, "Andrew Jackson and the Rise of Southwestern Democracy," *American Historical Review*, XXXIII, 65. ¹⁸ Goodspeed, p. 719.

¹⁹ T. P. Abernethy, "Andrew Jackson and the Rise of Southwestern Democracy," *American Historical Review*, XXXIII, 67. ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

The differences between the two parts of the state were growing greater rather than less. A struggle over the location of the capital had begun as soon as West Tennessee was able to make its weight felt, and in 1812 the legislature migrated from Knoxville to Nashville. In 1817 it returned to its first home, but in 1819 convened at Murfreesboro and sat there until 1825. Since that time it has met in Nashville.²¹ The boom had put the western section ahead in the race, and the panic did not alter this situation.

Out of the war, the boom, and the panic, there emerged a new order of things. Tennessee had ceased to be a frontier and had come to be an agricultural commonwealth. The old conditions continued to exist in the back country, but trade was occupying the attention of the rising towns, and steamboats and stagecoaches were taking the place of keel boats and pack horses. This economic transformation brought political changes in its wake and out of so evil a thing as the panic there flowered a new democracy.

²¹ Goodspeed, p. 280.

CHAPTER XV

THE NEW DEMOCRACY¹

DEEP IN the consciousness of the submerged masses is ever the desire for self-assertion, for "equality," while just as firmly planted in the minds of the fortunate few is the desire to control. The developments of the Revolutionary period had gone far toward liberating the masses from political and economic oppression, but it had by no means put them in control of the government. The period immediately following the Revolutionary era was not favorable to any further developments along this line. Indians and foreign powers gave trouble; the population was engaged in the occupation of new frontiers, and strong leadership was vital to the very life of the new nation. The man who could furnish this leadership was looked up to as a public benefactor. He regarded himself in that light when he accepted public office, and if he could contrive to make his official position contribute to his private fortune, it was only a just reward for his services. The small group of leaders in any community were closely connected, and offices were passed around among friends and kinsmen as a matter of course.

It was the panic of 1819 which first disturbed this peaceful order of society. A situation similar to that which prevailed in Tennessee following the sudden collapse of the price of cotton in that year was wide-

¹ See article by the author, "Andrew Jackson and the Rise of Southwestern Democracy," *American Historical Review*, XXXIII, 64-77. Also sketch of Jackson by the author in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

spread throughout the states south of New England.²

The distress was probably the most acute which the nation ever suffered, for it affected not only the trading and speculating class, but a large proportion of the agricultural population as well. The courts were flooded with suits for debt,³ and some of them temporarily suspended proceedings on cases of this nature.⁴ In Tennessee a movement was set on foot to induce Governor McMinn to call a special session of the legislature in order that some form of relief might be granted the debtors.⁵ The governor, whose section of the state, East Tennessee, had come unscathed through the panic, at first failed to understand the significance of the matter,⁶ but soon he discovered which way the political winds were blowing, and the extra session was duly called.⁷

The substantial portion of the population was generally opposed to this proceeding,⁸ but certain politicians had a different point of view. Felix Grundy had come to the state from Kentucky in 1809. His reputation as a criminal lawyer had preceded him, and he fell readily into a lucrative practice. In 1811 he had been elected to Congress in time to take a leading part with the "War Hawks" in bringing on the second conflict with England. In 1814 he retired from this post and returned to private

² Thos. H. Benton, *Thirty Years' View* (New York, 1854), I, 5; Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the Senate*, 1820, pp. 4-16, message of Governor McMinn.

³ Jackson Papers, MSS. in Library of Congress, Jackson to Capt. Gadsden, Aug. 1, 1819.

⁴ *The Clarion and Tennessee State Gazette*, Nashville, March 28, May 2, 1820.

⁵ *Nashville Gazette*, April 26, May 10, 1820; Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box G 2, No. 69, Graham to McMinn, March 3, 1820.

⁶ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 69, McMinn to Graham, March 27, 1820.

⁷ *Nashville Gazette*, May 20, 1820; *Knoxville Register*, Oct. 24, 1820.

⁸ Overton Papers, John Sommerville to John Overton, June 25, 1820; *Knoxville Register*, June 20, 1820; Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the Senate*, 1820, pp. 4-16.

life for a period of five years. His strength in his profession lay, not in legal learning, but in forensic persuasiveness with the jury. It was in keeping with his character that, in 1819, he should come forward as champion of the popular cause. He was the first demagogue of Tennessee and the local father of the democratic movement which, in its national phase, bears the name of Andrew Jackson.

Grundy announced himself as a candidate for a seat in the state senate on a "relief" platform, and a spirited campaign followed in the Nashville district.⁹ The popular cause triumphed, and its hero dominated the ensuing session of the legislature. The central feature of his program was the establishment of a state loan office or "bank." The capital of this institution was to be furnished by the state, its directors elected by the legislature, and its funds loaned in the different counties in proportion to the taxes paid in each. Creditors were to be induced to receive the notes of this bank by a provision that a refusal to do so would result in suspension of collection for a period of two years.¹⁰

This scheme was opposed by Andrew Jackson and his neighbor and friend, Edward Ward, who argued that it made something beside gold and silver a tender in payment of debts, and hence was unconstitutional. They memorialized the legislature to this effect, but that body refused to receive the memorial on the ground that its language was disrespectful.¹¹ The truth of the matter was that Jackson, in conversation, had said that any man who voted for the "stay" law was guilty of perjury,

⁹ *Nashville Gazette*, June 17, 1820; *Nashville Clarion*, May 23, 1820.

¹⁰ *Knoxville Register*, July 18, 25, 1820; *Nashville Gazette*, July 8, 1820.

¹¹ *Nashville Clarion*, July 25, 1820.

and the fate of the memorial suffered as a result of this language.¹²

In this stand Jackson, queerly enough, found himself in alignment with East Tennessee, for that section of the state had little need of relief legislation, and its leaders were of the old school.¹³ Nevertheless, the Grundy program was passed by a strictly sectional vote, with East Tennessee on one side and Middle Tennessee on the other.¹⁴ The bank was established, but the directorate which the legislature cautiously selected included none who would have been apt to favor its establishment. John McNairy refused to serve as president, but John H. Eaton accepted appointment on the board.¹⁵ James Jackson, a wealthy merchant of Nashville and a close friend, though no relation, to Andrew, criticized Eaton for his action, but Andrew said nothing.¹⁶ The assembly had responded to the popular demand but it had put the bank into the hands of conservatives. Wealthy but panic-stricken Middle Tennessee had played the demagogue again, as it had done on the land question in 1806.

The relief movement was not confined to the one state. As has been said, it affected all the country south of New England, and out of it grew the national democratic movement of the Jackson period. The masses, out of their dire need, for the first time rose up to demand relief, and they got it. Having once tasted of the heady drink of power, they were never again to resign it wholly into the hands of the politicians and the enlightened minority.

¹² *Knoxville Register*, Aug. 15, 1820.

¹³ *Nashville Clarion*, June 20, 1820; *Nashville Gazette*, June 17, 1820; *Knoxville Register*, Aug. 22, 1820.

¹⁴ *Gazette*, June 14, 1820.

¹⁵ *Clarion*, Aug. 8, 1820; *Register*, Aug. 8, 1820.

¹⁶ *Jackson Papers*, James Jackson to Andrew Jackson, March 1, 1821.

In 1821 the supreme court of Tennessee, by a vote of two out of three, decided, on the same ground taken by Jackson in 1820, that the "stay" law was unconstitutional, but the decision was held up for technical reasons.¹⁷ In 1822 the legislature, by an almost unanimous vote, refused to repeal the law,¹⁸ and in 1823 reënacted it.¹⁹ By this time the notes of the state bank were as good as any other available currency and the victory of Grundy was no longer significant.

Before this date momentous changes had taken place. In 1821 McMinn's third term expired, and he was not eligible for reëlection. The candidates who sought his place were Colonel Edward Ward and General William Carroll. Ward was of Virginian origin, well-educated, and a wealthy slave-owner and planter. Carroll was from Pennsylvania; a merchant and a soldier. He had opened the first nail store in Nashville, and was owner of the first steamboat which, in 1818, reached the town.²⁰ In 1811 he had taken a prominent part in the organization of a local military company, of which he was elected captain, and Jackson had helped procure arms for the command.²¹ He had served under Jackson in the Creek campaign, and had been elected to succeed his chief as major general of militia when the latter was translated to the Army of the United States. In this capacity, Carroll had commanded the Tennessee troops, constituting the left wing, at the battle of New Orleans. It was his command which withstood the heaviest shock of the British attack, and his fame was second only to that

¹⁷ *Gazette*, June 16, 23, 30, 1821.

¹⁸ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1822, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Register*, Oct. 17, 31, 1823.

²⁰ *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, April 14, 1827.

²¹ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 205-6.

of Jackson. Shortly after this engagement he wrote to the "Hero" of the occasion and urged him to offer for the presidency of the United States,²² but during the next year a break occurred between the two. The reasons for this rift are obscure, but its effects were far-reaching.²³

Carroll had lost heavily in the panic of 1819 and was looked upon as a poor man at this time. He was touted as a simple man of the people.²⁴ Ward was accused of being an aristocrat and a college-bred man who despised the poor.²⁵

The press took an active part in the campaign, the Nashville *Clarion* and Knoxville *Register* supporting Carroll, and the *Whig* and the *Gazette* of Nashville backing Ward. Jackson used all his powerful and ramifying influence in the cause of the latter, and denounced Carroll and his associates as a group of demagogues.²⁶ The campaign waxed exceedingly warm, and was the most exciting that Tennessee had known since 1803 when Jackson had once before backed the wrong candidate.

It is surprising that neither of the aspirants favored the bank of 1820. They both issued statements on the subject, and both agreed that farmers could never hope to improve their situation by borrowing at 6 per cent when their agricultural operations rarely paid more than 5 per cent on the investment. Thrift and economy, they

²² *Ibid.*, II, 217-18.

²³ Coffee Papers, Tennessee Historical Society MSS., p. 9, Jackson to Coffee, Feb. 2, 1816; *Ibid.*, p. 44, same to same, March 10, 1823.

²⁴ *Clarion*, July 18, 1821.

²⁵ *Register*, July 17, 1821.

²⁶ Coffee Papers, p. 33, Jackson to Coffee, July 26, 1821; Jackson Papers, MSS. in Tennessee Historical Society, Jackson to Capt. John Donelson, Sept. 2, 1821; also in Parton, II, 612-13.

said, were the only remedies for the prevailing financial ills of the country. Yet neither candidate recommended the destruction of the bank. Ward advocated a unified state system, with a central office in Nashville and branches distributed over the state.²⁷ He undoubtedly intended that this should be a regular commercial organization under private ownership, and hence entirely different from the loan office of 1820. Carroll, on the other hand, insisted on the necessity for a return to specie payments.²⁸ In 1819 all the banks except the old State Bank of Knoxville, of which Hugh Lawson White was president, had suspended, and their paper now passed at a heavy discount. The notes of the new state bank were no more valuable than the others, and a return to a specie basis was of primary importance, as Carroll viewed the situation. He, as a merchant, had suffered as a result of over-trading and the consequent panic. He believed that paper money was largely responsible for all the trouble, and was ever afterward a staunch advocate of a sound specie basis for all currency. This did not involve an opposition to banks in general. It was inflation which he opposed.

Remarkably little was said of other issues during the campaign; yet it appears that Carroll let it be known he favored a revision of the state constitution which would make it possible to tax land according to its value instead of at a flat rate per hundred acres. He was definitely the people's candidate, and the returns of the election are the most direct evidence to that effect. He carried every county in the state save two, East Tennessee joining West Tennessee in sweeping him into office.²⁹

²⁷ *Gazette*, June 2, 1821.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1821.

²⁹ *Clarion*, June 27, 1821.

Jackson and the "aristocratic" party had been routed by the new leader of the democracy.

Carroll had stolen the thunder from Grundy and ushered in the second phase of the apotheosis of the people. He opposed the "stay" law and all other forms of relief legislation. He believed that banks existed for commercial purposes and should be conducted in the usual business manner. He desired a strong and independent judiciary. He believed that the lot of the masses should be ameliorated by progressive, humanitarian legislation. He insisted that a penitentiary should be established, and the criminal code revised so as to abolish the use of the pillory, the whipping post, and the branding iron.³⁰

Except for an intermission of one term, made necessary by the constitution, Carroll remained in office until 1835. During that period he succeeded in putting his reform ideas largely into practice. Not only was a penitentiary established, but an insane asylum was founded, and imprisonment for debt was abolished. Nothing interested Carroll more than the question of education, and he finally succeeded in securing substantial appropriations and the formulation of laws which sought, for the first time, to establish a system of common schools for the state. He also advocated the construction of internal improvements, and appropriations for this purpose were made during his incumbency. Under his leadership specie payments were resumed in 1826, and during the early thirties the bank of 1820 was dissolved. Meanwhile several commercial

³⁰ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the Senate*, 1821, pp. 86-99, Carroll's first message; *Ibid.*, 1822, Carroll's second message; *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1823, pp. 9-15; *Ibid.*, 1827, pp. 7-17.

banks were chartered by the state, and a branch of the Bank of the United States located in Nashville. The progress actually accomplished in the establishment of a school system and a system of internal improvements was discouraging; yet beginnings were made which paved the way for further progress in the succeeding period.

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the reform governor was the calling of a constitutional convention which met in 1834 and revised the frame of government, providing for taxation of land according to value rather than at a uniform rate per hundred acres, and for the election of county officials by the people instead of by the legislature. This was the consummation of the democratic movement in the state, but it was not accomplished without arduous effort. Several proposals to call a convention had been defeated by the legislature, beginning in 1821. It was not until 1833 that the measure was finally adopted and the convention called.

The alignment in this struggle is of unusual interest. In the legislature, Middle Tennessee favored the convention, while East Tennessee opposed it. As in connection with the land question in 1806 and then again in connection with the bank of 1820, Middle Tennessee, the home of wealthy land magnates, stood for democracy against East Tennessee, the home of the small farmer. Middle Tennessee politicians in all three cases were bidding against East Tennessee politicians for the support of the people, and in every case they won. It is interesting that Andrew Jackson should have been brought up in such a school.

When the people were asked to vote for a convention,

they did so by a large majority, but the alignment here was quite different from that in the legislature,³¹ and it is an unequivocal demonstration of the fact that representatives do not always speak for their constituents. There was no fencing between politicians from the two sections of the state in this case. It was altogether a question of the landed class against the poor. In the valleys of northeast Tennessee and in the Cumberland basin—the long-settled parts of the state—the vote was heavily against the convention. In the mountainous and hilly districts lying between these two areas, the vote was as heavily in its favor.

The most peculiar situation, however, existed in the old Congressional Reservation. This area included the "Western District," lying between the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers, and a broad strip extending along the southwestern border of the state. Here the lands had been opened in 1818 for the satisfaction of North Carolina warrants, and the best acreage was taken up by speculators, but no provision was made for the sale of the remainder. Thus about half the land was held out of the market and left to be occupied by squatters. This class evidently had grown to outnumber the owners, for a heavy vote in favor of the convention was cast in every county of the Reservation. There is no other way in which to account for this phenomenon, for this was one of the richest parts of the state, and certainly those who owned land here were not in favor of a change which would increase their taxes. David Crockett's district lay in this area and in Congress he devoted his attention primarily to an effort to secure lands for the squatter class.

³¹ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1823, p. 155.

POPULAR VOTE ON CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION - 1833.



Per cent of Vote for Convention.

- 0 to 9
- 10 to 24
- 25 to 49
- 50 to 74
- 75 to 100
- 0% (white)

*Tennessee Assembly-Journal of the
House of Representatives
1833, 155*

Between 1819 and 1834 the democratic movement had gone through two phases in Tennessee. The first phase, of which Grundy was the protagonist, stood for relief legislation and inflation of the currency in the interest of the debtor. Carroll, partly because of his personal popularity and partly because the bank of 1820 did not prove to be the financial panacea which the people had expected, arrested this development and converted the democracy to a policy of retrenchment and specie payments along with progressive social legislation. This distinguishes the movement sharply from the Populism of a later day, for the latter was clearly of the debtor-class, inflationist variety. The fact that the democracy of the thirties was of another type was due in large measure to the strong leadership of such men as Carroll, Jackson, and Thomas H. Benton. The specie policy of the Jackson period has usually been looked upon as a debtor-class program. It was in fact the policy of conservative, commercially-minded men of the period following the panic of 1819. Such men were not afraid of banks, but they were afraid of inflation.

The part played by Andrew Jackson during this period of Tennessee history is worthy of note. He was in complete accord with Carroll's economic ideas, but he gave no aid to the liberal movement which Carroll was so ably leading. Not only this, but he definitely set himself against the movement and its leader. As a result, he was discredited as a local politician at the same time that his name was being placed upon the banner of the national democratic movement, of which the local was merely one manifestation. This anomaly requires some explanation. It is therefore necessary to trace certain phases of Jackson's rise to national political fame.

It was the Battle of New Orleans, and that alone, which made Jackson a national figure. The political importance of this event was realized at once, not only by Carroll and other Tennesseans, but also by Aaron Burr and Edward Livingston who approached the "Hero" on the subject of the presidency.³² But Monroe held that high office with the prospect of reëlection in 1820, and no direct move could be made until after that year. Meanwhile Jackson retained his military command.

In 1816 the General quarreled with William H. Crawford of Georgia, secretary of the treasury and heir apparent of the Virginia dynasty. In 1814 Jackson had negotiated a treaty with the Creek Indians whereby they ceded certain lands to the United States. In 1816 Crawford negotiated a treaty with the Cherokees who held conflicting claims, and the Secretary not only granted compensation for lands already ceded by the Creeks, but allowed them damages for spoliations said to have been committed by Jackson's troops when they passed through the Indian country in 1813.³³ The Hero of New Orleans looked upon this as a malicious slur upon his military reputation, and he hated Crawford accordingly. There was also good political material in the quarrel, for Crawford was made to appear an opponent of the interests of the West, while Jackson was the avowed champion of the cause of the frontier.

His reputation as an expansionist was increased two years later when he was sent to the Florida border to punish the Seminole Indians for certain raids which they had made across the line. On this occasion he

³² Bassett, *Jackson*, p. 279; Parton, II, 350.

³³ *Nashville Whig and Tennessee Advertiser*, July 31, 1819; *Jackson Papers*, MSS. in Library of Congress, Jackson to Monroe, Oct. 10, 1823.

wrote to President Monroe stating if it should be signified to him through John Rhea, a congressman from East Tennessee and an old friend to the General, that it was desirable to take possession of the Floridas, he would do it without further authorization.³⁴ Rhea wrote, giving Jackson to understand that Monroe approved the plan. Pensacola was taken and Jackson was attacked in the Cabinet and in the Senate. He went to Washington to face his enemies, but he burned the Rhea letter at the request of its author.³⁵ Monroe supported Jackson who had supported him in 1808, but did not admit that he had authorized the attack on Pensacola. The burning of the Rhea letter, which might have cleared up the situation considerably, was apparently a magnanimous act on the part of Jackson in order to save his friend from the embarrassment of having Monroe disavow his right to speak for him.

In 1821 Jackson resigned from the army and was appointed governor of Florida by Monroe. The General accepted the commission as a public vindication by the President of his conduct in the Seminole affair. But Florida was always unkind to Jackson, and he gave up his place before the year was over, having gone through several trying experiences which added to his reputation for overbearing conduct. He now returned to the Hermitage, ostensibly to retire to "the pleasures of domestic felicity," but actually to run for the presidency.

At about this time there was formed in Nashville a little group of three men who took upon themselves the responsibility for the future political career of the

³⁴ Bassett, p. 246.

³⁵ *American Historical Magazine*, IX, 85-93, Jackson to R. G. Dunlap, July 18, 1831.

Hero of New Orleans. Of these, William B. Lewis is perhaps the best known. He had come to Nashville at an early date, and it appears that he was for some years proprietor of the Nashville Inn.³⁶ He had married a daughter of William Terrell Lewis, who was not a kinsman. This young woman, upon her father's death, had become the ward of General Jackson. It was through this marriage that William B. Lewis came into possession of the homestead of his wife's father, located near the Hermitage. Here an intimate friendship had grown up between Jackson and Lewis long before the General became famous at New Orleans.

John H. Eaton,³⁷ whose home was at Franklin near Nashville, and who later married the notorious Peggy O'Neill, had married for his first wife another daughter of William Terrell Lewis. It was doubtless through this connection that he became associated with Jackson. As early as 1813, he was acquainted with certain of the General's friends.³⁸ In 1816 he undertook to write a life of "Old Hickory" and at that time was unknown to fame. In 1818 he was appointed to the United States Senate, and in 1819 defended Jackson against his detractors in that body, who were being led on by John Williams, the senator from East Tennessee. These facts would make it appear that Jackson had taken a personal interest in Eaton and had used his influence to bring him into public notice. Eaton stood ready to repay the debt, and now became the second member of the Nashville trio. His position in the Senate made him an especially valuable member.

³⁶ *Nashville Whig*, April 9, 1816, advertisement.

³⁷ See sketch by the author in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

³⁸ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 276-78, John Reid to Jas. Robertson, March 1, 1813.

The third member of the group was John Overton, with whom Jackson had boarded at the widow Donelsons's when he first came to Tennessee, with whom he had practised law in the frontier days, and with whom he had been closely associated in many ways during all the intervening years. Eaton and Lewis were followers of the General. Overton was his backer, his friend, and his adviser. Eaton and Lewis went to Washington and received office at Jackson's hand. Overton stayed in Nashville and received nothing, but he remained a staunch friend until the day of his death, and burned his political correspondence in order that curious eyes might not pry into the details of the campaign.³⁹ He was one of the richest men in Tennessee; he had been a member of the state supreme court, and had many business interests. He was the most distinguished member of the group, but is the least known because he remained in the background, demanding no reward for his services.

There was nothing in the composition of this coterie or in the record of Jackson himself to connect his candidacy with the democratic movement which was in full tide in Tennessee under the leadership of Carroll. Eaton, Lewis, and Overton were all conservative men of the old school, who were interested in government for what they could get out of it. Not one of them could be considered a man of the people. They did not come out openly and oppose the new movement as did Jackson, because they were more cautious, but the opinion of men of their type was well expressed by one Thomas Emmerson, a friend to Overton, and at one time a colleague of his on the state supreme court. In

³⁹ Clayton, p. 99.

letters addressed to his friend,⁴⁰ he denounced manhood suffrage and the idea that an office-holder should be looked upon as a servant of the people and amenable to instruction from his constituents. He did not intend to seek office, he said, nor to accept a place under the assumption that the people were doing him a favor to give it to him. He considered the favor was the other way round, and he was true to his convictions. There is no better illustration of the spirit of the old school as it passed from the scene. Jackson and his allies were also of the old school, but they had no very strong convictions and were willing to make friends with the times. It is not the greatest men who go to the top in politics.

In spite of the conservatism of Jackson and his friends and their coldness toward the liberal movement in Tennessee, the victorious liberals did not hesitate to support the candidacy of the "Hero" for the presidency. His only important local opposition consisted of a few personal enemies, while East Tennessee under the leadership of Hugh Lawson White, and West Tennessee under the leadership of the Nashville trio, united for the first time on an important issue. Strangely enough, it was Felix Grundy, originally favorable to Henry Clay and never liked by Jackson, who took upon himself the leadership of the Jackson cause in the legislature.⁴¹ Grundy was astute enough to see that since state pride over the prospect of having a son in the White House

⁴⁰ Overton Papers, Thos. Emmerson to Overton, May 25, Dec. 26, 1823, June 3, 1824, Sept. 9, 1825, Jan. 17, 1826.

⁴¹ *Register*, Oct. 19, 1819; *Constitutional Advocate*, Sept. 17, 1822; Jackson Papers, Grundy to Jackson, June 27, 1822; *Ibid.*, S. R. Overton to Jackson, Sept. 10, 1822; Coffee Papers, p. 46, Jackson to Coffee, Aug. 15, 1823; Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1823, pp. 77-84.

was so great as to cause all sections to drop their differences and unite in the interest of Jackson's candidacy, he could do no better by his own career than to fall into line.

In 1823 it became necessary for John Williams, the Tennessee senator who had attacked Jackson on the Seminole issue in 1818, to present himself before the legislature for reëlection. It would not look well for the General's presidential candidacy abroad for his avowed enemy to remain in office in his own state. In order therefore that he should be defeated, it became necessary for Jackson himself, at the last minute, to announce himself as an opposition candidate. He won the contest and returned to the body from which he had resigned in 1798. Here he voted consistently in favor of internal improvements and the protective tariff,⁴² thus taking a definite stand on the most important issues of the day. After having served for little more than a year, he retired in favor of Hugh Lawson White.

It is clear that in the campaign of 1824 Jackson stood before the country as a nationalist, favoring vigorous exercise of the powers of the Federal government. This would appear to have been inconsistent with his "Tertium Quid" connections of 1808 and with his general profession of strict Jeffersonian principles. As late as 1822 he wrote to Monroe to congratulate him upon the veto of the Cumberland road bill.⁴³ Then, after having voted for improvements in 1824, he stated in 1826 that he believed the Federal government to have the right to construct them only with the consent of the state within which the work was to be done.⁴⁴ During the next

⁴² Bassett, pp. 344-45. ⁴³ Jackson Papers, Jackson to Monroe, July 26, 1822.

⁴⁴ Polk Papers, MSS. in Library of Congress, Jackson to Polk, Dec. 4, 1826.

year his Tennessee following in the legislature opposed the policy. Thus he had apparently completed the circle and swung back to his first opinion.⁴⁵

On the question of the tariff he was decidedly at odds with his own constituents. Tennessee, though never a cotton state on a large scale, was controlled chiefly by cotton planters, to which class Jackson himself belonged. Like the cotton states, she never really believed in a protective tariff. In 1824 Jackson defended protection on the ground that it was necessary to build up manufactures for military reasons, and for the creation of a home market for surplus agricultural products.⁴⁶ It is possible that his point of view as a military man was responsible for his stand, and it is also possible that his desire for the presidency influenced his opinion. It was hardly a strict-constructionist stand.

In the campaign of 1824 Jackson considered William H. Crawford, of Georgia, his most dangerous opponent. Crawford had attacked him in the Cabinet during the Seminole controversy of 1818, and now, as the anointed of the Virginia dynasty and the champion of state rights, was running against him for the presidency. John C. Calhoun was also a member of the Cabinet in 1818. Jackson had understood that the Carolinian supported him during the disturbance of that year, and now Calhoun joined forces with Jackson and accepted the second place on his ticket.

Before 1828 came around to bring about the second Jackson campaign, many important changes had taken place. One of the most interesting of these was that

⁴⁵ *Knoxville Enquirer*, Jan. 9, March 19, 1828.

⁴⁶ Parton, III, 35-36, Jackson to Coleman, April 26, 1824; Jackson Papers, Jackson to J. W. Lanier, May (?), 1824; Coffee Papers, pp. 54-55, Jackson to Coffee, May 7, 1824; *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56, Jackson to Overton, June 18, 1824.

Crawford had withdrawn from the race, and only John Quincy Adams stood against "Old Hickory." In 1824 Crawford had been supported by Martin Van Buren of New York. With Crawford's withdrawal, Van Buren was left free to make a new alliance, and this time he threw his support to Jackson. When the General went down to New Orleans to celebrate, on January 8, 1828, the victory which had been won thirteen years previously on the plains of Chalmette, the Republican organization of New York sent as its representative on that auspicious occasion Colonel James A. Hamilton.⁴⁷ It was under these circumstances Hamilton suggested to Lewis and Jackson that Crawford might be brought into the camp.⁴⁸ Certain moves to this end had been made the previous year,⁴⁹ and why not? Van Buren had supported Crawford in 1824; why should Crawford not support Van Buren in 1828? Yet this probably would involve a break with Calhoun. Jackson had been informed on good authority in 1824 that Calhoun had not been his friend in 1818 as he had supposed and as Calhoun had allowed him to believe. But the General would not credit this report at the time, nor did he admit suspicion of his running-mate in 1828.⁵⁰

These circumstances, however, would make it appear that the clever little "Red Fox" of New York had his plans well laid. It would not be difficult for him to induce Crawford to expose Calhoun's unfavorable

⁴⁷ Jackson Papers, J. A. Hamilton to Jackson, Feb. 17, 1828.

⁴⁸ *American Historical Magazine*, IX, 93-98, R. G. Dunlap to Jackson, Aug. 10, 1831.

⁴⁹ Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box C 2, No. 100, Thos. W. Clay to Jas. Erwin, March 17, 1827; Jackson Papers, Wm. H. Crawford to Hugh L. White, May 27, 1827; *Ibid.*, Hugh L. White to Wm. H. Crawford, June 19, 1827.

⁵⁰ *American Historical Magazine*, IX, 98-104, Jackson to Dunlap, Aug. 29, 1831.

attitude toward Jackson in the Cabinet when that body was investigating the Seminole affair. Such an exposé would pave the way for Van Buren to supplant the South Carolinian in the estimation of General Jackson. All this came about in due season. Van Buren's plans had a way of turning out as he intended they should. The affair of Peggy Eaton was merely a windfall which tumbled into his lap.

Jackson, as president, took a stand against internal improvements. New York had dug the Erie Canal and did not care to have the Federal government assist Pennsylvania to construct a competing system. Van Buren, in league with the state rights school of Virginia, admitted his influence in this connection.⁵¹

Jackson's war on the Bank of the United States is usually considered to have been in line with his earlier views, but the evidence to this effect is altogether *post hoc*. He himself said that he began to distrust the Bank when in 1825 he read of the South Sea Bubble explosion.⁵² He did not begin to manifest this hostility before 1827, and it seems fairly clear that his opposition became active only when he realized that the influence of some of the branches of the Bank were being used against his election. It was characteristic of him to form his opinions on such a basis. Van Buren denied his influence in this matter, but New York had her safety fund system, and the Bank was located at Philadelphia.⁵³ Henry Clay believed that the New Yorker, in collabora-

⁵¹ See also *David Crockett's Circular*, pamphlet in Library of Congress (Washington, 1831).

⁵² *Biddle Correspondence*, Memorandum of conversation between Biddle and Jackson, pp. 93-94.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64, 69-71, 73-74, 79-80, 104; R. C. H. Catterall, *The Second Bank of the United States*, pp. 183-84.

tion with Virginia politicians, was responsible for the change.⁵⁴ William B. Lewis, representing Tennessee interests, was opposed to a break with the Bank.⁵⁵

Thus the nationalist senator of 1823 became the state rights president of 1829. Van Buren gave to Democracy the platform under which it became the champion of strict construction and was finally transformed from the party of the West to that of the cotton-growing South and the slaveocracy. Jackson's nullification proclamation was hardly in line with state rights doctrines, whatever one may have thought of the right of nullification. Jackson was not a theorist. He was a man of action and an opportunist. He always maintained that he was a believer in state rights,⁵⁶ but is usually classified as a nationalist. It is impossible, in fact, to classify him as belonging strictly to either school of thought, for he bestraddled them.⁵⁷

Not only was Jackson not a consistent politician, he was not even a real leader of democracy. He had no part whatever in the promotion of the liberal movement which was progressing in his own state under the leadership of William Carroll. His advisers and friends were conservative men of the old school who rather opposed than assisted the new movement. The democracy of America called him to be its leader because he was a westerner with a colorful personality and a transcendent military reputation. He was a self-made man, generous

⁵⁴ *Biddle Correspondence*, pp. 105, 110-14.

⁵⁵ Hale and Merritt, p. 356; *Biddle Correspondence*, pp. 84, 97-98.

⁵⁶ Parton, III, 93-94; Jackson to Wm. Dickson, Sept. 1, 1801; *Coffee Papers*, p. 89; Jackson to Coffee, April 10, 1830.

⁵⁷ In 1832 he wrote: "No man will go further than I will to preserve every right reserved to the people, or the states; nor no man will go further to sustain the acts of congress passed according to the express grants to congress."—*American Historical Magazine*, IV, 235-37; Jackson to Coffee, Dec. 14, 1832.

and dynamic, but he was not a progressive politician. Brought up in the old school of William Blount, he always believed in making the public serve the ends of the politician. Democracy was good talk with which to win the favor of the people and thereby accomplish ulterior objectives. Jackson never really championed the cause of the people; he only invited them to champion his. He was not consciously hypocritical in this. It was merely the usual way of doing business in those primitive and ingenuous times. An illustration will probably clarify the point. In 1798 Jackson condemned the Federalists for using office for partisan purposes.⁵⁸ In 1829 he wrote to a friend that he had many applications for office and "so far as real charitable objects presented themselves, I have yielded my might to their relief." He intended, he said, to turn the spies out of the camp.⁵⁹ Turning the spies out may have been all right, but using office for charitable purposes was a rather private way of dealing with the public business.

⁵⁸ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 42-44, Jackson to Overton, Jan. 22, 1798.

⁵⁹ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 231-32, Jackson to Rev. Hardy Cryer, May 16, 1829.

CHAPTER XVI

LAND LEGISLATION AND EDUCATION

AFTER the adjustment of the land question in 1806-1807, conditions in this field remained practically undisturbed until the end of the second war with Great Britain. Then, simultaneously with the boom which followed that conflict, there was a farther advance of the white man in his encroachments against the red. The land question took on new life, and surveying and speculating once more claimed the principal attention of the population of Tennessee. It is fortunate for the purposes of this discussion that this movement developed during the years the new democracy was rising in the West. It is not by the professions of candidates for office, but by the enactments of legislatures that one can feel the living pulse of the body politic and judge of its growth and progress. No better specimen could be desired for the study of the new popular movement than legislation passed at the time to provide for the disposal and management of the public domain. No other interest was so vital. It was in this field that the political forces fought their battles and registered their victories.

In 1816 Newton Cannon, representative in Congress from Middle Tennessee, wrote to Governor McMinn advising steps be taken to show the Federal government that land available for the satisfaction of North Carolina warrants had been exhausted, and that the tract south and west of the Congressional Reservation

line should be thrown open for that purpose.¹ Congress was pledged by the act of 1806 to do this in case of necessity. Indians still owned most of the tract in question, but there were many squatters in that small section of it to which the native title had been extinguished.² In addition, under the North Carolina land grab act of 1783, the Indian claim had been ignored, and many warrants secured through John Armstrong's office were located there. When the Old North State ceded her western domain to Congress, these claims were protected, but occupation could not be effected until the native title, recognized by the Federal government, should be extinguished.

Governor McMinn was not slow to accept and act upon the suggestion of Representative Cannon. The surveyors of the several land districts north and east of the Congressional Reservation line were called upon to make reports as to the quantity of land granted through their offices, and as to the quantity still subject to disposal.³ During 1817 they unanimously reported all good lands had been disposed of, and that the acreage remaining open was of little value.⁴ The governor naturally decided that the supply available for the satisfaction of North Carolina warrants was exhausted, and the Tennessee delegation in Congress was able to secure in 1818 an act opening the Reservation for the purpose indicated.⁵ During the same year, Andrew Jackson and Isaac Shelby negotiated a treaty with the

¹ Correspondence of Governor McMinn, MSS. in Tennessee Archives, Nov. 14, 1816. ² *American State Papers, Public Lands*, III, 287-89.

³ Correspondence of Governor McMinn, *loc. cit.*, Dec. 23, 1816.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1817.

⁵ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1817, pp. 170-77; *Ibid.*, 1819, pp. 6-17; *Knoxville Register*, June 30, 1818.

Chickasaws whereby the natives surrendered their claim to the soil.

According to the legislation of 1806, Tennessee had not gained the right to dispose of any of these lands in her own name, but merely to administer them for the satisfaction of warrants issued by the mother state. Yet many citizens of Tennessee owned North Carolina warrants, and they naturally had a keen interest in the matter. The western state now proceeded to carry out its functions by arranging for a regular and complete survey of the Reservation into townships, five miles square. The territory was divided into districts and a land office provided for each. A committee was appointed to adjudicate claims and invalidate those of illegal origin. Surveyors were commissioned to mark off the plats, and all was got in readiness for the occupation of the new lands during 1820.⁶

This legislation followed, in general, the precedents established by the state in 1806-1807, but no provision was now made for the setting aside of lands for schools. In 1806 Congress had directed that six hundred forty acres in each township be reserved for common schools, but the state officials had ignored the instructions and only twenty-two thousand instead of nearly half a million acres were set aside for this purpose in the district north and east of the Congressional line.⁷ The warrant holders came first and the schools came afterward, if they came at all. In 1818 Congress made no new stipulations as to the district south and west of the line, it being intended apparently that those of 1806

⁶ Whitney, *Land Laws of Tennessee*, pp. 200-7.

⁷ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1823, pp. 325-29, report of Mr. Polk's Committee; Carroll Correspondence, *loc. cit.*, Graham to Carroll, Oct. 6, 1825.

should be followed; but the state used its discretion and left the schools out of account altogether.

This attitude is easy to understand. The value of North Carolina warrants rose and fell as the possibility of getting good lands for them increased or decreased. They were often sold at prices around twenty-five cents per acre, and most of them had fallen into the hands of speculators. These speculators were usually prominent men in North Carolina and Tennessee who used their political influence to further their landed interests. As a rule, it was only they who were able to hold their warrants against such an opportunity as that which occurred in 1820. A glimpse into the situation is afforded by an advertisement appearing in a Nashville newspaper in that year stating that Samuel Polk had lost a pair of saddle-bags containing warrants, mostly made out in the names of different members of the Polk family, totaling thousands of acres, and dated November 30, 1784.⁸ The gentleman was doubtless riding up to Nashville from Columbia in order to convert his paper into goodly acres. Much evidence affirms the fact that the lands had fallen into the hands of a very few men.⁹ Only one Revolutionary soldier actually settled at this time upon the tract granted him, and the legislature allowed him, as a mark of distinction, to survey it with as many corners and off-sets as he chose! The men who owned the lands made the laws, and little they cared for common schools.

During 1819 surveyors representing the interests of

⁸ *Nashville Gazette*, July 15, 1820.

⁹ McMinn Correspondence, loc. cit., Governor's message to the legislature, Oct. 29, 1817; Polk Papers, MSS. in Library of Congress, J. B. Porter to Messrs. Walker and Polk, Sept. 24, 1824; Hamilton, *Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, I, 377-78, A. D. Murphey to Ruffin, Feb. 13, 1827.

the warrant holders trooped into the new country, sought out its choicest spots, and staked out claims for their masters.¹⁰ The warrants issued through John Armstrong's office had been located shortly after their issue, and their fortunate holders did not have to compete with the newcomers. Squatters were allowed to retain their improvements without competition provided they had warrants to cover them. But the holders of military warrants were under the necessity of finding lands upon which to settle their claims. A big and rushing business was done in this way, and the foundation of many fortunes was laid at the time. John C. McLemore, a land office official and friend of Andrew Jackson, secured copies of the North Carolina records on which claims to Tennessee lands were founded, and the Tennessee legislature declared these copies to be authentic for legal purposes. With this advantage, with gentlemanly personality and powerful friends, McLemore did an enormous business in real estate during these years.

No definite limit had been set to the time during which North Carolina might compensate her Revolutionary veterans in grants to Tennessee lands, and she manifested a renewed interest in this affair during the years under discussion.¹¹ In 1789 she had granted to her new state University all such claims as should escheat to the government.¹² In 1822 she finally decided to close her books and to grant to the University all claims in cases where the veterans had failed to apply for their grants.¹³ Tennessee, having closed her entry offices during the

¹⁰ "Recollections of Memucan Hunt Howard," *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 55-68.

¹¹ Tennessee Archives, Land Papers, 1820.

¹² *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 268 ff.

¹³ Moore and Foster, I, 318.

same year, refused to satisfy these additional warrants,¹⁴ but the matter was finally adjusted and the claims made good. The settlement was not ultimately completed until 1827,¹⁵ and by that time new problems had arisen.

The condition in which the old Congressional Reservation was left by these developments was peculiar. About half the lands, including all the better tracts, had been granted to persons deriving claims from North Carolina. Congress still controlled the title to the remainder of the area, and no provision was made for bringing it into the market. The result was that squatters settled upon it in large numbers.¹⁶ It was these people for whom David Crockett spoke in Congress and it was they who carried their section of the state against the adoption of the constitution of 1834. Their fate lay in the hands of the Federal government.

The problem of the Congressional Reservation was not the only land question with which the legislature of Tennessee had to deal during the panic year of 1819. At that time Governor McMinn made a treaty with the Cherokee Indians whereby they ceded to the United States the lands lying between the Hiwassee and the Little Tennessee rivers, this area being known as the Hiwassee District.¹⁷ It lay within the tract which North Carolina reserved to the Cherokees in 1783, and by the adjustment of 1806, the right to the soil was granted to Tennessee as soon as the Indian title should be extinguished. Now, therefore, the state came into posses-

¹⁴ *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 275-80.

¹⁵ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1823, pp. 325-29; *American State Papers, Public Lands*, IV, 530-32.

¹⁶ *Nashville Gazette*, July 15, 1820; *Ruffin Papers*, I, 423-25, A. D. Murphey to Ruffin, Dec. 31, 1827.

¹⁷ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 48-50, McMinn to D. Graham, June 1, 24, 1819.

sion of a domain upon which no North Carolina warrants had been or could be laid, and which was hers to dispose of subject to the reservation that she should not sell it for less than two dollars the acre.

As a result of the panic, money was scarce and there were those who wished to reserve the lands until times should improve rather than sacrifice them upon such a market.¹⁸ But Grundy needed money with which to establish his new state bank, and this was the principal source from which he intended to secure it.¹⁹ It was proposed in the legislature by J. C. Mitchell to establish a system of graduated prices, similar to that which Thomas H. Benton later advocated in Congress, but Grundy would not hear to it.²⁰ This was the origin of the idea of graduated land prices, and there is on record a letter of 1828 in which Mitchell explained his system to Benton.²¹

Not only did Grundy oppose the graduation system, but he fought all attempts to secure preëmption for occupiers. Thus did the champion of democracy fight the cause of the people. He was supported by a bloc of rich counties in Middle Tennessee and opposed by most of those in the eastern section. Under his leadership it was provided that the district should be surveyed into townships and the lands sold at auction to the highest bidder. One-fourth of the purchase money was to be paid in cash, but the remainder was not to become due for ten years, and a large part of the interest was

¹⁸ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the Senate*, 1820, pp. 4-16, Message of Governor McMinn.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1821, pp. 6-27, Message of Governor McMinn.

²⁰ Sioussat, "Some Phases of Tennessee Politics in the Jackson Period," *American Historical Review*, XIV, 54.

²¹ *American State Papers, Public Lands*, V, 514-16.

remit ted until the end of the sixth year. When the bank was established in 1820, its notes were made receivable for the lands, and the funds arising from the sales went to furnish capital for the institution.²² In this manner Grundy dove-tailed one feature of his policy into the other. His bank was supposed to favor the debtor; his land policy clearly favored the speculator.

Soon, however, Carroll's brand of democracy rose upon the ruins of that of Grundy, and a change in the land policy was one of the most expressive features of that transition. In 1823 Congress rescinded the provision that Tennessee could not sell lands for less than the Federal price, and during the same year the legislature took up Mitchell's graduation scheme, though Mitchell was no longer a member of that body, and put it into force for the Hiwassee District.²³ It was the first trial of the principle, and its features are of interest. It was provided that for a period of six months the occupiers of unsold lands should have exclusive privilege of purchasing them to the extent of one hundred sixty acres at a price of one dollar and a half per acre. During the six months following, any one might purchase as much as six hundred forty acres at the same price. After that the price was reduced and the same principle repeated during successive periods until the lands should be sold at twelve and a half cents the acre, and finally at one cent.²⁴ Squatters would thus be converted into owners, and, at the same time, the treasury would receive the maximum benefit.

²² Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1819, pp. 112-13; Whitney, *Land Laws of Tennessee*, pp. 387-96.

²³ *American State Papers, Public Lands*, V, 514-16, J. C. Mitchell to Thos. H. Benton, March 29, 1828.

²⁴ Whitney, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-403.

The original sales of Hiwassee lands under the act of 1819 netted approximately half a million dollars, and the average price was about four dollars per acre. The sales under the graduation system netted about a quarter of a million, and the result of the new method was considered highly satisfactory by its friends.²⁵

It was in 1823 that Congress relinquished to Tennessee the remainder of the lands north and east of the Congressional Reservation line, and the legislature proceeded at once to apply the new graduation principle to them also. Occupiers were granted preëmption rights to one hundred and sixty acres at twelve and a half cents per acre, and after three months anyone might purchase as much as six hundred forty acres at that price.²⁶ The valuation was later reduced to one cent per acre and the residue of lands sold at that price. Thus squatters ceased to form an appreciable part of the population in any part of the state except that south and west of the Congressional Reservation line.

The spirit of the old régime is clearly reflected by the failure of the state to carry out the provisions of 1806 for the maintenance of common schools, but the new democracy was of a different spirit. In 1823 the legislature took up for the first time the problem of providing for instruction of the children of the people. It enacted that the revenues from the sale of the relinquished lands north and east of the Congressional line and the taxes arising from these lands should be permanently devoted to this object. The provision was opposed by Felix Grundy.²⁷ The fund was to be invested in the stock of the

²⁵ *American State Papers, Public Lands*, V, 514-16.

²⁶ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1823*, pp. 58-66; *Whitney*, pp. 308-15.

²⁷ Tennessee Assembly. *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1822*. p. 278.

State Bank and the interest arising therefrom was to be paid over annually to trustees chosen in each county by the court thereof. The trustees were to use the funds for the education of children whose parents or guardians were not able to defray the expenses of their instruction.²⁸ The means, however, proved to be far too meager for the intended purpose, and the provisions of the system tended to discredit it as one of pauper education. Furthermore, no central administrative body was provided. It seems evident that this first attempt at popular education in the state was well meant, but it proved valuable only as an experiment.

Realizing the need of more money for educational purposes, a movement was started in 1824 for securing additional revenues for the common school fund.²⁹ During this year James K. Polk, as chairman of a joint committee, made a report to the legislature setting forth a plan to secure from Congress the relinquishment of the unappropriated lands south and west of the Congressional Reservation line. The funds accruing from this source were to be used to augment the common school fund. Reports were presently secured from surveyors of the district, and the conclusion reached that little of the land in question would sell for more than twelve and a half cents per acre, and that it was of practically no value except for the purpose which the legislature had in mind.³⁰ In 1829 Polk, having become a member of Congress in the meantime, brought this subject up in the House of Representatives, and was supported by all the Tennessee delegation except

²⁸ Whitney, pp. 209-15.

²⁹ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1822, pp. 225-20.

Thomas D. Arnold of East Tennessee, and David Crockett of the western district.³¹ Crockett opposed the proposition with all his crude might, arguing that the object of the state was to derive as much revenue as possible, whereas his object was to secure their improvements to the squatters upon the land. He finally brought in a committee report recommending that the occupiers should have their tracts at a low price, but the Tennessee delegation still opposed him. They made a party measure of the question, and the opposition supported Crockett.³² It was from this beginning that the breach presently developed between the famous woodsman, congressman, and humorist, and the administration of Andrew Jackson.³³

Crockett's opposition resulted in postponing the relinquishment of the lands in question until 1841. In the meantime, he lost his seat in the House, and went to Texas as a result, only to die at the Alamo; but he won his case, for when the cession was made it was provided that the occupiers should have the preëmption of their lands.³⁴

In 1827 the educational problem was again attacked. Half the proceeds of all previous sales of the Hiwassee lands, together with all future proceeds, were allotted to the common school fund. But the difficulties of the situation could not be overcome so easily, and, though the fund amounted to approximately half a million dollars before the end of 1831, little real progress was

³¹ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1823, pp. 325-29; *American State Papers, Public Lands*, VI, 353-58.

³² Sioussat, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58; *American State Papers, Public Lands*, VI, 128-29.

³³ David Crockett's *Circular*, pamphlet in Library of Congress (Washington, 1831).

made toward the establishment of an effective system of public instruction.³⁵ Throughout the history of the question, the wealthier population of Middle Tennessee tended to oppose, while the yeomanry of East Tennessee tended to favor the cause of popular education.

When Henry Clay brought up his plan for the distribution among the states of revenues accruing from the sale of public lands, Tennessee was inclined to oppose, but after the Whig party was organized in the state, it accepted Clay's program on this issue.³⁶ It is easy to see how this was possible, for by 1835 Tennessee had secured control of most of the lands within her borders and she would profit more by receiving her share of the sales in other states than by the relinquishment to her of the relatively small amount of her own unappropriated territory. Thus do opinions change as economic interests are altered. Yet a study of the land question demonstrates that democracy made real progress in Tennessee during the administration of Governor Carroll.

³⁵ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1831, pp. 307-13.

³⁶ Polk Papers, A. G. Harrison to Polk, May 10, 1839; Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1835, p. 497; Nashville *Whig*, March 6, Dec. 4, 1839.

CHAPTER XVII

ANDREW JACKSON AS A LAND SPECULATOR

IN THE year 1795 Andrew Jackson journeyed to Philadelphia for the purpose of selling a large acreage of Tennessee lands. In this business he was acting partly for himself and John Overton, who were marketing twenty-five thousand acres each, and partly for one Joel Rice. On reaching Philadelphia, he could find no other purchaser than David Allison. This was he who had begun the practice of law with Jackson in the early years, who had been sent to the East as the agent of William Blount, and who had come to make his headquarters in the Pennsylvania metropolis. Allison took the lands at a fifth of a dollar per acre and gave Jackson notes to cover the amount involved. Jackson took his share of the proceeds and purchased goods for his mercantile operations in Nashville. In order to pay for his supplies, he endorsed Allison's note and passed it on to the merchant from whom he made his purchases.¹ Shortly after reaching home, Jackson was notified by his Philadelphia creditor that Allison was not meeting his obligations and that he himself would have to take up the note which he had endorsed.² This he succeeded in doing, but with considerable difficulty. Having paid the debt, Jackson took Allison's note for twenty thousand dollars, but he could anticipate only a slim chance of collecting it.

Meanwhile Allison, in great financial difficulties, mortgaged eighty-five thousand acres of Tennessee

¹ *Jackson Correspondence*, I, 15, 22.

² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

lands to Norton Pryor. The debtor having died in a debtor's prison, Jackson was employed to levy upon his heirs for the foreclosure of this mortgage. Jackson, being a judge at the time, employed Overton to transact the business for him. The suit was conducted in the Federal court and the foreclosure accomplished. For his services, Jackson received five thousand acres of the land involved and proceeded forthwith to sell it and guarantee the titles. Andrew Erwin, of Bedford County, Tennessee, acquired twenty thousand acres of the estate.³

In 1811 Jackson discovered that the Federal court did not have jurisdiction in this case, that the foreclosure was invalid, and that he was liable to suit by persons to whom he had sold his five thousand acres, not for the original value of the lands which they held, but for their present value. This would have been a ruinous thing, and the man who was soon to become a hero did not fail to make up with energy for his previous lack of sagacity. He took out the old note which he held against Allison, mounted horse, and rushed to Georgia in search of the heirs of the debtor. Having found them, he secured a complete release of their claims upon the entire eighty-five thousand acres involved. This enabled him not only to give clear titles to those who had purchased from him, but to demand a settlement from those who held the other eighty thousand acres.⁴ The only one who refused to come to terms was Andrew Erwin, and suit was accordingly brought against him.⁵ The Arch-Democrat-to-be was quite willing to make others pay for his mistakes; his own five thousand acres was remuneration for his part in the proceedings through

³ *Ibid.*, II, 427-28.

⁴ *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, Sept. 6, 1828.

⁵ *Knoxville Register*, June 4, 1828.

which Erwin acquired his land, and Jackson, a lawyer and a judge, should have known that the Federal court did not have jurisdiction in such a case.

Erwin had been in peaceable possession of this property for more than seven years, and there was an ancient North Carolina and Tennessee law giving title to any occupier who had been undisturbed in his occupancy for that length of time provided he could show some legal claim to the land which he held. The old ruling held it to be unnecessary that he should be able to trace his deed back to the original grant, but in recent years the supreme court of Tennessee had held that such an unbroken chain should be established. This court at the time was made up of Justices Thomas Emmerson, Robert Whyte, and John Haywood. Haywood opposed the ruling established by Whyte and Emmerson and embarked upon a campaign against it.⁶

The matter was extremely important, for many Tennessee land claims rested upon grants which had originated in fraud or were of doubtful legality. It was estimated that half the titles in the state would be thrown open to question in case the ruling of the court should be finally established and acted upon. Haywood therefore spoke for powerful interests, and his backing was powerful in proportion. But Jackson was against him. The General was always a stickler for the letter of the law so far as he understood it. In this attitude he was a true disciple of William Blount, who had been able to control legislatures and frame statutes and amass lands under cover of legality. Jackson did not deal in forged warrants as did Sevier, and was always in favor of a strict scrutiny of titles to the soil.⁷ It was, therefore,

⁶ Moore and Foster, II, 143.

⁷ Buell, *Jackson*, I, 227 ff.

quite in keeping with his principles and practices that he should oppose a latitudinarian construction of the law of limitations. This quite aside from his interest in the eighty thousand acres of Allison lands, but the case gave point to his principles. If Haywood should win, he might not be able to evict the occupiers who had purchased as a result of the foreclosure proceedings.

In his fight on this question Jackson allied himself with a certain Patrick Darby. Patrick was brother to William Darby who, in 1819, published the well known *Emigrant's Guide*. Born in Pennsylvania of humble parentage, he became a carpenter; later he wandered through Louisiana and Missouri, and in 1813 reached Tennessee where he metamorphosed himself into a home-made lawyer. Here he made a practice of buying up disputed land claims,⁸ most of these apparently being acquired from absentee claimants and involving the necessity of evicting occupants who held adverse possession. The law of limitation was, of course, intended to protect the occupants; the repudiation of this law would protect Darby as well as Jackson. The General accordingly turned over to this man the enforcement of his claims against the Allison lands.⁹

The legislature, being in sympathy with Haywood's contention, passed in 1819 a new law of limitations which affirmed the old ruling that the occupant should be protected even though his claim could not be traced directly back to the original grant. William L. Brown,¹⁰ one of the leading lawyers of Nashville, was the author of

⁸ *Constitutional Advocate*, Sept. 17, 1822.

⁹ Jackson Papers, Articles of agreement, April 13, 1821; *Ibid.*, R. I. Easter to Jackson, May 10, June 25, 1821.

¹⁰ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee*, 1819, pp. 53-55.

the act, but it did not settle the matter.¹¹ The new statute was not retroactive, and much still depended upon the interpretation of the supreme court. The legislature, however, had a heart in its work and in 1822 added an additional judge to that tribunal. Emmerson resigned during the same year and was replaced by Joseph Peck. The new place was filled by the appointment of William L. Brown himself. Brown and Peck were both of Haywood's views, and the court consequently was made safe for the occupant.¹²

The question which was thus settled had involved a bitter political struggle. Darby, who appears to have been a shyster of the worst type, had become personally involved with Felix Grundy and Pleasant M. Miller. Grundy had once had Darby disbarred from the practice of law, and Darby had once threatened to horsewhip Grundy.¹³ In 1821 Darby purchased the *Constitutional Advocate* of Nashville, in the columns of which paper he defended his cause.¹⁴ Yet his enemies did not let him rest. During the same year Miller drafted and sent to Overton for inspection a champerty bill which would make it illegal to purchase pretended titles to lands where adverse possession was enjoyed by an occupant.¹⁵ The act was duly passed by the assembly,¹⁶ and Darby, considering this a blow aimed directly at himself,

¹¹ J. C. Guild, *Old Times in Tennessee*, p. 73; *American Historical Magazine*, VII, 109, "Sketch of Wm. L. Brown."

¹² Guild, *op. cit.*, pp. 459-61. Guild is wrong in saying that Catron was appointed to the new judgeship at this time.—Jacob Peck (ed.), *Tennessee Reports*, I, 225-45, August term, 1823, *Barton's Lessee v. Shall*.

¹³ *Constitutional Advocate*, Sept. 3, 10, 1822.

¹⁴ *Enquirer*, May 18, 1828.

¹⁵ Overton Papers, Overton to P. M. Miller, April 13, 1823; Jackson Papers, P. M. Miller to Jackson, July 1, 1823.

¹⁶ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee*, 1821, pp. 71-75.

complained bitterly of the injustice of it.¹⁷ In this connection he became embroiled with Overton, but Jackson gave him aid and comfort despite his close friendship of long years with Overton. The General wrote to Coffee that he had withheld Darby's pen so far, but that if Overton should persist in his course, he would leave the self-made lawyer and editor to defend himself against his enemies as he saw fit. He berated Overton, Haywood, and the legislature for packing the supreme court in the interest of the law of limitations and said that Darby would go before the people with the facts and put them down.¹⁸

It is difficult to appreciate the full significance of this affair. Jackson was just beginning his first campaign for the presidency as the candidate of the people. Overton was taking a leading part in promoting this campaign. It was under these circumstances that the General turned against his old friend and against the majority of the leading men of Tennessee to ally himself with a notorious shyster and support the principle that absentee claimants had the right to evict occupiers of long standing. This was doubtless Jackson's idea of legality; certainly it was not Jacksonian democracy.

It may appear strange to find such conservative men as Overton and Haywood supporting the rights of the occupier against the rights of the man who could show a better technical claim. Their stand might seem to classify them, along with the legislature, as adherents of the popular cause, believers in the rights of the people. Yet this was hardly the case. They were merely defending

¹⁷ Nashville *Advocate* Aug. 20, 1822.

¹⁸ Coffee Papers, Jackson to Coffee, April 15, 1823; *Ibid.*, same to same, May 24, 1823.

the citizens of Tennessee against the absentee claimants, who lived in many cases in North Carolina and other states. Probably half the voters of Tennessee were interested, and no politician can ignore the interests of half the voters. Only the land speculator found his interest on the other side, and Jackson must be thus classified.

Grundy's opposition to preëmption when the Hiwassee land bill was before the legislature in 1819 may appear to be inconsistent with his support of the occupier in this struggle, but there is no inconsistency. The squatter was a man who had no claim whatever to the lands upon which he lived, and he had little or no political influence. He belonged to the poorest class. On the other hand, the occupier, for whose protection the statute of limitations was passed, rested his claim upon a deed, and he might be a man of considerable importance in the community. The squatters were relatively few and impoverished; the occupiers were many and influential. Grundy's position was politically correct.

For some reason the unfortunate Mr. Erwin did not profit by the victory of the occupiers. The suit between him and Jackson dragged on until 1823. Then the General made a proposition to settle for twenty thousand dollars. A meeting was arranged between the two, but Mrs. Erwin appeared in the place of her husband and tearfully informed Jackson that such a settlement would mean ruin for her and her family. The gallant and soft-hearted General could not resist such an appeal. He agreed to forego his interest in the lands, but James Jackson and Patrick Darby held a half interest in the claim, and they received five thousand dollars each for

their rights.¹⁹ Thus the case of the Allison lands was brought to a close. Jackson got nothing for all his pains—nothing but scars.

The full complexity of the relations between Jackson and Overton will never be revealed, but their joint connection with the founding of Memphis is not the least interesting chapter in the story. It must be recalled once more that the North Carolina land act of 1783 had enabled speculators to purchase western lands, to which the Indian title had not been extinguished, at ten pounds the hundred acres. Under the terms of this law, John Rice, a confederate of the Blount group, had secured in 1784 a five-thousand-acre tract on the fourth Chickasaw Bluff which overlooked the Mississippi where the city of Memphis now stands. In 1795 Jackson journeyed to Philadelphia to sell lands for Joel and Ezekiel Rice, the latter having become heir to the Chickasaw Bluff tract through the death of John Rice. It was probably in this connection that Jackson obtained a half interest in the Bluff tract, for in 1796 he and Overton became joint owners of the land.²⁰ Jackson later disposed of a part of his holdings to connections of General James Winchester, of River Raisin fame, and to John C. McLemore, a land office official, retaining only an eighth interest.²¹

After the Chickasaws surrendered their claim to the lands lying between the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers in Tennessee and Kentucky, Winchester surveyed the southern boundary of Tennessee across this tract,

¹⁹ Jackson Papers, James Jackson to Andrew Jackson, Oct. 19, 1823; *Knoxville Register*, June 11, 1828.

²⁰ Winchester Papers, Overton to Winchester, n. d.; J. H. DeWitt, "The Founding of Memphis," MS. in the Winchester Papers; Hale and Merritt, p. 303.

²¹ Winchester Papers, Overton to Winchester, Aug. 21, 18(?).

and the town of Memphis, lying just north of this line, was at once laid out.²² Lots were sold and a strenuous attempt was made to have the county seat located at Memphis. Overton, who was the most active promoter of the group, visited the legislature to look after the business,²³ but the people of the county had a voice in the matter, and McLemore, being a gentleman of pleasing address, was dispatched to take care of that end of the transaction. Overton wrote that a large quantity of whiskey would be necessary to assist the honest citizens in making up their minds, and arrangements were made to provide an adequate supply.²⁴ In spite of all these efforts and in spite of the eligible location of the new town, the movement failed and the county seat was established elsewhere.

Overton nursed his infant settlement with fatherly care, but the town grew slowly and its promoters were often discouraged. Finally in 1823 Jackson decided that the business of land speculation did not mix well with the profession of the politician, and he sold out his interest to McLemore.²⁵ Overton struggled on through all adversity and his labors were finally rewarded.

Another series of speculations was based upon a treaty which Jackson had negotiated with the Chickasaws in 1816. At that time the natives ceded a large tract of land in the Tennessee Valley of Northern

²² Overton Papers, Overton to W. B. Winchester, Aug. 30, 1820; *Ibid.*, Articles of agreement, Jan. 12, 1819; J. H. DeWitt, "General James Winchester," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, I, 192 ff., Winchester Papers, Overton to Winchester, Oct. 4, 1819; *Ibid.*, Shenburne to Winchester, Aug. 7, 1819.

²³ Winchester Papers, Overton to Winchester, April 4, 1823; Overton Papers, Winchester to Overton, Nov. 2, 1823.

²⁴ Overton Papers, Winchester to Overton, Dec. 3, 1823.

²⁵ Jackson Papers, Copy of deed, Oct. 13, 1823; Overton Papers, Printed articles of agreement.

Alabama, but there was reserved to the Colbert family a considerable acreage on the northern bank of the river at the point where it was crossed by the Nashville-Natchez Trace.²⁶ The Colberts, chiefs of the Chickasaw nation, had lived here for years, operating a ferry and cultivating a plantation with Negro slaves.

When these Alabama lands were put upon the market in 1818, Jackson attended one of the sales. He bid for a desirable tract, and so great was his prestige in these parts that no one would bid against him. The land was accordingly sold to him at the minimum price, whereas it would normally have brought much more than two dollars an acre.²⁷

It was during the same sales that a land company was formed by certain Tennessee speculators under the leadership of James Jackson and John Coffee.²⁸ James Jackson was not related to the General, but was a close friend. He was a rich merchant of Nashville, the General's principal business agent, and his partner in several important deals. General John Coffee had married one of Rachel's nieces, had been a partner of Jackson in his early mercantile operations, and had commanded his cavalry during the Creek campaign and the center of his line at New Orleans. He had been appointed principal surveyor of these Alabama lands in 1817,²⁹ and now in 1818 took a leading part in the organization of the Cypress Land Company. In spite of competition from similar companies composed of men from different states, the Cypress group succeeded in buying the site they desired at the foot of Muscle Shoals, and here they

²⁶ Whitney, *Land Laws of Tennessee*, p. 42.

²⁷ *Clarion*, Nov. 24, 1818; *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, April 19, 1828.

²⁸ Jackson Papers, James Jackson to Andrew Jackson, March 1, 1821.

²⁹ Coffee Papers, Jackson to Coffee, March 27, 1817.

laid out the town of Florence.³⁰ Jackson held a few shares of stock in this enterprise and was in close touch with its leading spirits.³¹ He should properly be considered one of the fathers not only of Memphis, but also of this Alabama town.

None of these speculations won for Jackson any wide notoriety, but his connection with a little venture in Florida lands brought him to the notice of the United States Senate. It appears that the business was set on foot by a meeting of three Jacksons in Nashville during November, 1817. On this occasion Andrew suggested to James and his brother John, a Philadelphia merchant, that a good profit might be made out of the purchase of town lots in Pensacola.³² During 1818 the suggestion was acted upon. The General gave to his wife's nephew, Captain John Donelson, letters of introduction to the authorities in the Spanish town, and Donelson became the agent of a company which had been formed to purchase the property.³³ James Jackson and John H. Eaton were prominent members of this organization. The lots were purchased and several members of the General's family ultimately made a handsome profit on them.

When the Seminole campaign was being aired before the Senate in 1819, it was alleged against Jackson by his enemy, John Williams, the senior senator from Tennessee, that he had tipped off his friends on the Florida purchase in anticipation of his occupation of Pensacola in 1818.³⁴ In answer to this, Jackson denied that he had

³⁰ *Jackson Correspondence*, II, 353-54.

³¹ *Jackson Papers*, John Jackson to Andrew Jackson, April 5, 1819; *Ibid.*, John McCrea to Jackson, April 15, 1819.

³² *Jackson Papers*, Deposition of John Jackson, Jan. 13, 1820.

³³ *Ibid.*, Deposition of James Jackson, Jan. 12, 1820.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, John Jackson to Andrew Jackson, April 5, 1819.

any pecuniary interest in the speculation or that he had had any reason to anticipate his Seminole campaign. He insisted, on the contrary, that his tip was suggested by the diplomatic negotiations then in progress looking toward the annexation of Florida by peaceable means.³⁵ The negotiations which led to the acquisition of Florida did not begin until January, 1818,³⁶ but Jackson might have known in 1817 that such a development was to be expected. There is no reason to believe he could have anticipated his own campaign a year before it occurred. Nor is there any reason to believe he was not sincere in saying that he had no pecuniary interest in the speculation. Jackson was always inclined to take care of his friends. He showed on many occasions that he did not consider there was anything selfish in his use of official position to serve them.

Of much more consequence than the Florida speculation were the events which grew out of the negotiation of the Chickasaw treaty of 1818. Many wealthy speculators held claims under the North Carolina act of 1783 to lands in the Tennessee part of the proposed purchase, and the commissioners, Jackson and Isaac Shelby, were entitled to the gratitude of a powerful class when they accomplished their mission.

There would have been no trouble except for certain reservations which had been withheld by the Chickasaws. One of these included a salt spring supposed to be highly valuable. The other was the same tract which had been retained by the Colberts under Jackson's treaty of 1816. Here the Federal government had planned to establish

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Deposition of John Donelson, Jan. 13, 1820; *Ibid.*, Deposition of Thos. Childress, Jan. 12, 1820.

³⁶ J. H. Latané, *American Foreign Policy* (Garden City, N. Y., 1927), p. 118.

an armory and foundry.³⁷ Naturally the location was considered valuable.

According to Jackson's account of the negotiations, the Indians refused to cede the desired lands at the price the government offered. They demanded twenty thousand dollars more, and Jackson and his friends agreed to raise this amount if the natives would cede the two reservations. It was agreed that those who furnished the money would receive the titles to the reservations, but, in order that there should be no suspicion aroused by the transaction, it was provided that should the government care to take over the reservations, it might do so upon refunding the twenty thousand dollars to those who had advanced it.³⁸

Upon completion of the treaty, Andrew Jackson and his friend, William B. Lewis, who was present during the negotiations, signed a bond for twenty thousand dollars,³⁹ and Jackson wrote to the Philadelphia firm of Kirkman and Jackson to cover their draft for that amount. He stated this was an exceedingly important matter and he was, therefore, extremely anxious that payment should be made promptly.⁴⁰

Now, before the treaty was actually signed, Lewis had made an agreement with the Indians that he was to have the salt spring reservation.⁴¹ The deed to the other

³⁷ Coffee Papers, Jackson to Coffee, Dec. 26, 1816.

³⁸ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 99-100, Andrew Jackson to Thos. Kirkman, Oct. 20, 1818. For a different interpretation of this treaty see S. C. Williams, *Beginnings of West Tennessee*, pp. 84-93.

³⁹ Jackson Papers, Jackson to McMinn, Aug. 20, 1819; James Shelby, *The Chickasaw Treaty*, Pamphlet in Library of Congress, p. 6.

⁴⁰ *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 101, Andrew Jackson to Washington Jackson, Dec. 28, 1818.

⁴¹ Overton Papers, John Williams to Overton, Jan. 15, 1819; Jackson Papers, Deposition of Wm. B. Lewis, Aug. 20, 1819; James D. Porter, "The Chickasaw Treaty," *American Historical Magazine*, IX, 252-56.

reservation was to be made out to James Jackson.⁴² When the treaty was published and other interested persons discovered the reservations had been alienated by the Indians before the articles were ratified, they made indignant protest;⁴³ and the matter was brought to the attention of the Senate by John Williams, who complained of the Florida transaction at the same time. The General was defended by his friend Eaton, but the government decided to put up the twenty thousand dollars and take over the property.⁴⁴

Again Jackson had failed as a speculator, and reaped only bitterness as a reward. He secured a large number of affidavits to prove that he was not privy to Lewis' dealings with the natives before the signing of the treaty.⁴⁵ He also denied categorically, in a memorial to the Senate, that he had been engaged in any purchase or speculation, either directly or indirectly, in his official capacity.⁴⁶ In view of the facts, this statement cannot be accepted as representing the truth. The Alabama reservation was to be handled in the name of James Jackson, but Andrew Jackson, the close-bargaining Scot, did not sign a bond for twenty thousand dollars without some financial interest in the business. The Shelbys, in their efforts to vindicate Isaac of complicity in the matter, called upon James Jackson to state what he knew of the transaction.⁴⁷ This gentleman refused to

⁴² *American Historical Magazine*, IV, 99-100, Andrew Jackson to Thomas Kirkman, Oct. 20, 1818.

⁴³ Jackson Papers, "Address by Jesse Benton to the People," clipped from the *Raleigh Register*, Sept. (?), 1824.

⁴⁴ Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Jackson to Wm. Williams, Sept. 25, 1819.

⁴⁵ Jackson Papers, Affidavit of R. I. Easter, Aug. 27, 1819.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Memorial of Andrew Jackson to the United States Senate, Dec. 14, 1819.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, James Jackson to Col. Leslie Combs, Oct. 11, 1828.

talk unless called upon by the General to do so.⁴⁸ The General made no such call.

The two Jacksons had been extremely close to each other in their business and private relations up to this time, but a break resulted from the controversy over the reservation. James Jackson evidently considered that the General had been unfair to him in not coming forward and assuming a share of the responsibility. He protected his former friend by silence, but could no longer support a hero who would play such a part.⁴⁹ But the truth would not unlikely have deprived the nation of one of its most famous presidents.

Isaac Shelby said that Jackson's conduct during the negotiation of the treaty was arrogant and selfish and, he believed, corrupt.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, he appears to have been correct. The General, as one would expect, acted entirely within the law, but when his equivocal transactions were exposed to the public, he was not willing to face the facts and jeopardize his career.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, J. Shannon to Dr. John Shelby, Oct. 25, 1825.

⁴⁹ Coffee Papers, Jackson to Coffee, Dec. 27, 1824; *Banner-Whig*, July 7, 1827.

⁵⁰ James Shelby, *The Chickasaw Treaty*, pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSITION

DESPITE the unsettled times caused by the war and the ensuing panic, the town of Nashville maintained a steady development during that period and the succeeding years. Since the progress of a community just emerging from the frontier state is typified by the growth of its towns, and since Nashville was not only typical but one of the most important centers of western life during this period, a study of its institutions will constitute a fair picture of the social and economic transition through which the Old Southwest was passing during the Jackson period.

In 1810 the town numbered eleven hundred souls.¹ By 1823 the population had increased to thirty-five hundred, about one-fourth of them being slaves.² The old public square with its courthouse and jail was still the center of the community. About it were clustered the taverns, the postoffice, the market-house, and the principal commercial enterprises. Most of the buildings in this neighborhood were now of brick. A few were three stories high, but most of them were one and two story structures in Georgian style.³ The streets were narrow and usually unpaved, but the sidewalks were marked off by curb stones and either paved with brick, as in the public square, or graveled, as on the side streets.⁴

¹ *National Banner and Nashville Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833.

² *Nashville Whig*, Aug. 22, 1823.

³ N. M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found it*, pp. 112-13; *Nashville Whig*, Aug. 22, 1823.

⁴ By-laws of the Town of Nashville, 1814, Document in Tennessee Historical Society Collection.

Provision was made during the early twenties for lighting the main streets with oil lamps,⁵ and a night watch was established. Loitering slaves constituted one of the most difficult of civic problems and many ordinances were passed to curb this nuisance.⁶ In order to keep the streets in repair, the community appropriated twenty thousand dollars for the purchase of about fifty slaves who were to be used for the work.⁷ The purchase of slaves for such public purposes was not at all uncommon and it must have proved satisfactory, for the system was maintained for several years at least.⁸ The spirit of progress abroad during the twenties is further illustrated by the construction, under municipal auspices, of a stone bridge which spanned the Cumberland just opposite the public square.⁹

In 1817 the first theatrical company visited Nashville,¹⁰ and in 1818 the Methodists did what they could to offset this by building a new church and establishing a resident clergyman in the town.¹¹ In 1820 the first theatre was built,¹² and in 1826 a second was constructed.¹³ In 1827 the first Episcopal church was organized.¹⁴ Sunday schools were coming into being at this time, but they were intended primarily for the secular education of the poor and were not at first under patronage of the churches. In 1826 the old Cumberland College was rechartered as the University of Nashville, and the Reverend Philip Lindsley, formerly of Princeton,

⁵ Woolridge, *Nashville*, pp. 113-14; *Nashville Whig*, Sept. 20, 1824.

⁶ *Banner-Whig*, Nov. 10, 1827.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Nov. 8, Dec. 6, 1828.

⁸ *Banner-Advertiser*, Sept. 27, 1833.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1833; Morris, *Tennessee Gazetteer*, 110.

¹⁰ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-15, 118-20.

¹¹ McFerrin, III, 64.

¹² Ludlow, pp. 201, 205-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 291, 380.

¹⁴ *Banner-Whig*, July 14, 1827.

became its president. Aside from this institution, the most famous local educational foundation was the Nashville Female Academy, founded in 1816, and enrolling now between two hundred fifty and three hundred¹⁵ students whereas the University rarely numbered more than one hundred.¹⁶ The élite during the early period sent their sons to Harvard and Yale—with a preference for Yale—and their daughters to the Moravian Female Academy in Salem. Civic-minded editors occasionally made complaints against this custom, and berated the wealthy for not patronizing the educational establishments in their midst, saying of the young ladies sent to the Moravian school that “they return tipped over with the German *bon ton*, unfitted for the society in which they move.” Sarah Childress, who became the wife of James K. Polk, made the long trip from Murfreesboro to the Moravian school on horseback, accompanied by her brother and followed by a slave who carried their portmanteaux on his horse. There were several academies and numerous elementary schools maintained in Nashville during this period. None of these was a public institution, but the corporation undertook, in some cases at least, to pay the tuition of children of the poor.¹⁷

The town made plans in the early twenties for the establishment of waterworks, but the task was not accomplished until the early thirties, when the corporation promoted a lottery to raise money for the project. A steam pump-house was then built on the river, and the water was conveyed to a reservoir on the public square whence it was piped to various parts of the town

¹⁵ *Banner-Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833.

¹⁶ *Nashville Whig*, Oct. 6, 1823.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1833.

in cast iron pipes.¹⁸ This was a marked improvement, for water had previously been delivered in casks at a cost amounting to forty or fifty dollars a year to each family.¹⁹

The coming of the thirties witnessed many other improvements. The infant town had thrown off its swaddling clothes and entered upon a period of robust and rapid growth. The population numbered approximately seven thousand,²⁰ and there were three hundred brick and two hundred frame dwellings within the town, beside about one hundred stores and as many shops.²¹ A new postoffice, a courthouse,²² and a new market-house and city hall had recently been erected.²³ At the market-house on the public square the slaves more often than the mistresses did the buying, bearing home on large leaves such purchases as butter and meat, for paper was as yet a luxury in the West. During these years the state established two large banking houses in Nashville, and since 1827 the Federal government had maintained there a branch of the United States Bank. In 1831 the state penitentiary was built on the outskirts of Nashville,²⁴ and two years later the construction of a hospital for the insane was undertaken.²⁵

While these public institutions were being established, the social life of the community was broadening. There were popular resorts at Tyree and Castillian Springs,

¹⁸ *Banner-Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833; *Tennessee Gazetteer*, pp. 120-23.

¹⁹ *Ruffin Papers*, I, 423-25, A. D. Murphey to Ruffin, Dec. 31, 1827.

²⁰ *Banner-Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833.

²¹ *Tennessee Gazetteer*, pp. 110-11; *Banner-Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833.

²² *Woolridge, Nashville*, p. 116.

²³ *Nashville Republican and State Gazette*, Feb. 12, 1830.

²⁴ *Tennessee Assembly, Journal of the Senate*, 1831, pp. 9-12; *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1831, p. 137.

²⁵ *Tennessee Assembly, Journal of the Senate*, Oct. 14, 1833.

which were frequented by the gentry for relaxation and pleasure.²⁶ Hotels were maintained at both places, and outings at such resorts were a principal feature of the social life. The popularity of the belle of the day was gauged by the number of young dandies accompanying her coach as "outriders" on the trip to and from Castillian or Tyree. Within the town the principal pleasure resort was Vauxhall Garden, located just beyond the business section, near where the postoffice now stands. Here was a large assembly hall for banquets and balls, a garden with walks and tables, and a patented circular railway. This last was looked upon as a marvellous novelty and advertised in glowing terms: "The rapidity of the motion . . . the novelty of the exercise, and the cooling and refreshing breezes which the process produces makes it a most fascinating and healthful enjoyment."²⁷ Hot and cold baths could be had down at the old sulphur spring—the "Lick" of frontier days was now only a memory—and a collection of Indian relics was also on exhibition here.²⁸ Dr. Gerard Troost, professor of natural philosophy at the University and the first state geologist, had his biological and geological collections installed in one wing of the market-house.²⁹

The theatre continued to grow in favor among the people. The playhouses of that era were constructed on the English model, with two tiers of boxes for gentlemen and their families, a pit for miscellaneous men, and a gallery above the boxes for the rabble. The plays of Congreve, Steele, Farquhar, Rowe, Sheridan, and Shakespeare were the popular presentations of that day, but the drama was always followed by a "short, laughable

²⁶ *Tennessee Gazetteer*, p. 165.

²⁷ *Tennessee Gazetteer*, pp. 120-23.

²⁸ *Banner-Whig*, June 3, 1831.

²⁹ *Woolridge, Nashville*, p. 116.

farce," or a pantomime. The Nashville theatre presented such well known actors as Junius Brutus Booth, Edwin Forrest, Edmund Kean, the Placides, and Tyrone Power. Theatre tickets usually cost one dollar, and children and slaves were admitted at half-price. The ranting of the actors ordinarily gave "complete satisfaction" to the "genteel" patrons of the muse. In 1827 Jane Placide, who had been appearing on the Nashville stage, with the engaging feminine helplessness of the day forgot to make reservation on the stagecoach and was forced to remain in town until the "rise of the river" when she could depart by boat. Thereupon no less an august personage than the mayor, together with members of the council, petitioned her again to appear before the citizens of Nashville.

Coffee houses where imported liqueurs and newspapers were available were now quite fashionable, and a public reading room was maintained in the business section of the town.³⁰ The old Nashville Inn had grown into a hostelry of considerable pretensions, a visitor from the East saying that it was maintained in as much style as the Tontine Coffee House in New York or Renshaw's Hotel of Philadelphia. The same traveler remarked that he was ushered to the bar and presented with a book in which he was asked to write his name and address.³¹

In the matter of dress, the *sans-culotte* of the post-Revolutionary period did not descend at once from the glories of the old régime to the funereal sobriety of the Puritan. The spike-tailed coat and the bell-crowned hat of the Jackson period were not always of somber black,

³⁰ *Banner-Whig*, May 25, 1831.

³¹ *Trinity College Historical Papers*, Series VI, "General Slade's Journal of a Trip to Tennessee," p. 56.

as may be gathered from a description of the costume worn at a ball by a young man of the time. This outfit consisted of a light bottle-green coat, white vest and drab cassimere pantaloons. The coat had fancy steel buttons and white lining.³²

As for the costume of the women, the simple old men who had grown up on the frontier much objected to the gayety of their dress. The following quotation tells the story:

If the old ladies of that day had met with one of our slender, pale-faced, fashionable belles, rattling in silks and satin—her clothing drawn over her delicate limbs as tight as the skin upon a lean weasel—her waist belted up in buckram until compressed within the circumference of six inches—her snow white bosom peeping over the top of her outer garments, protected only by the slight covering of gauze, ribbons and lace—a monstrous staked and ridered bonnet upon her head, streaming with flounces and furbelows—a green veil, half as long as her whole person, hanging over her face and fluttering its ample folds in the winds as she journeyed onward—a bunch of jewelry, as large as a wagoner's horse bells, suspended from each ear, and dangling upon her shoulders,—her dress cut and made according to the fashion of the present day—her delicate ancles [sic] covered only by a pair of thin, flesh colored hose, at that day called stockings, and her tender little trampers encompassed within a pair of prunella slippers, they would have set all the bear dogs upon her, . . .³³

The social standards of old Virginia and the Carolinas were transported to the West by the leaders of the new region, and in many ways the copy which they set up in Nashville was not a bad one. Visitors uniformly testified to the "elegance" and neatness of the town and to the taste displayed in the arrangements of the better residences.³⁴ The dress and the manners were much the

³² Ludlow, p. 256.

³³ Breazeale, pp. 12-13.

³⁴ *Banner-Whig*, Oct. 26, 1831; "Slade's Journal," *loc. cit.*, p. 56.

same, but the manner was different. In the older society a man knew his status; in the new country he assumed it. Lineage counted for little in the West; wealth counted for much, and a "gentleman" was known by his clothes. A lofty military bearing was preferred in Nashville, and a pompous pose would carry a man far.³⁵ Education was not respected, and innate refinement was often lacking; yet the people of all ranks were genial and hospitable toward strangers.

A. D. Murphey, a prominent North Carolinian, visiting Nashville in 1827, advised a friend against moving out to the western town. Conditions had changed very much, he said, since 1814. Society was now out of debt and Nashville was the most extravagant place he had ever seen. House rent would cost five hundred dollars the year, and his friend, Mr. Craighead, had found that the cash expenses for a small family amounted to twenty-five hundred, though he saw only enough company to save appearances. The profits from the practice of law had fallen off since hard times were over, and none of the leading attorneys could afford to live in town except Mr. Fogg, who was a Yankee and saw no company. "As to society," he wrote, "it is very different from ours . . . if the Moral education of your children be a primary consideration don't bring them to Tennessee."³⁶

Strange as it may seem, there were certain medieval

³⁵ An interesting illustration of this is given by the actor Ludlow. As manager of an amateur theatrical organization in Nashville during 1818, he cast Sam Houston in a comic part. Houston protested in these words: "What! low comedy? Sam Houston in low comedy! Great God! my friend Ludlow, what are you thinking of? Surely you are not serious? By the Eternal, Sir, the people will hiss me."—Ludlow, pp. 166 ff.

³⁶ *Ruffin Papers*, I, 423-25, A. D. Murphy to Ruffin, Dec. 31, 1827.

institutions which were retained in the western towns of the Jackson period with no apparent feeling that they were out of keeping with their surroundings. The practice of requiring the county courts to fix the rates for food, drink and shelter to be charged by taverns is one of these, but the laws concerning markets are even more anachronistic. The market on the public square at Nashville was kept open from daylight until noon on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and during these hours the buying and selling of country produce was not permitted to be carried on at any other place. There were stalls in the market which were rented by the year, and only here could meat be sold in quantities smaller than the quarter. Outdoor stands were provided for the country people who brought produce to town for sale, and no such produce could be bought for re-sale. In other words, "forestalling," to use the medieval term, was prohibited.³⁷

Another medieval institution was the maintenance of the old classification of "mechanics" as apprentices, journeymen, and master craftsmen. Apprentices were under the legal jurisdiction of their masters, and the masters often advertised in the newspapers for the return of their charges who had run away. The situation of the journeyman was also apparently about the same as in the Middle Ages, yet not so easily enforceable, as is indicated by an advertisement in a Nashville newspaper wherein an association of journeymen tailors gave notice that their masters had reduced their wages while charging the public the same rates as before. Consequently the

³⁷ Proceedings of town commissioners, Nov. 4, 1802, MS. in Tennessee Historical Society Collection; By-laws of the Town of Nashville, 1814, Document in Tennessee Historical Society Collection; *Banner-Whig*, Dec. 29, 1827.

journeymen proposed to take in work on their own account and charge the same rates they had previously been allowed by their masters.³⁸ No guild organization for the enforcement of discipline existed.

The number of mechanics, which term included all handicraft workers, in a town such as Nashville was considerable, and the trades which they practised were much more varied than those now to be found in a town of the same size. The profits of such labor were very good, the average mechanic being able to earn around five hundred dollars per year,³⁹ which was approximately the same as the salary paid to a plantation overseer or a clerk. Unskilled labor was worth about ten dollars per month,⁴⁰ while slaves could be rented at eighty to one hundred dollars per year. The existence of slavery made it difficult to secure white labor, and slaves were commonly used for rough work even if it were in the public service or in the service of a corporation. Yet slaves were not much used in skilled occupations, and white labor was necessary in this field. Because of the fact that mechanics were considered as of no social consequence and, as "laborers," ranked below even the poorest farmer in point of respectability, it was necessary to pay them better wages than they would have required in the free states.

While the Middle Ages was still able to cast its lengthened shadow across the West, the new era was casting its shadow before. A windsor chair factory had been

³⁸ *Banner-Advertiser*, April 10, 1833.

³⁹ Estimate based largely upon reports of the keeper of the Tennessee Penitentiary where the convicts worked at the mechanical trades and their earnings were accounted for. Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1833, pp. 114-18; *Journal of the Senate*, 1835, pp. 70-83.

⁴⁰ *Woolridge, Nashville*, p. 308.

established in Nashville during the early twenties,⁴¹ and during the early thirties the use of steam began to revolutionize industry even on the frontier. There were now two sawmills, the steam-pump of the waterworks plant, and, more wonderful than all, a steam rolling mill with six boilers, and a flywheel thirty-two feet in diameter and weighing twenty-seven thousand pounds.⁴² In 1833 a newspaper editor called attention to the superiority of coal as fuel and stated that it might be had locally at ten cents the bushel.⁴³ In 1839 an advertisement appeared in a Nashville newspaper stating that fifty cents admission would be charged to see a wonderful new invention, consisting of an electro-magnetic engine running a small railroad car.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most significant development of all was the great system of overland communications which had grown up. Stage lines now ramified in all directions from Nashville, connecting the metropolis with every part of the state and with the most distant parts of the Union. The frequent comings and goings of the stages added picturesqueness to the life of the taverns and the towns, and their mail pouches brought news of the outside world into the most remote villages. Even more at that day than now, the newspaper furnished the mental pabulum of the community, and the gentlemen of the old school sought with avidity the foreign as well as the domestic "intelligence" conveyed in the public prints.

Nashville was the center of a network of roads which connected the commercial metropolis of Middle Tennessee with its economic hinterland. These highways

⁴¹ *Nashville Whig*, May 16, 1821.

⁴² *Tennessee Gazetteer*, pp. 110-11; Woolridge, *Nashville*, pp. 213-16, 219 ff.

⁴³ *Banner-Advertiser*, Dec. 12, 1833.

⁴⁴ *Nashville Whig*, Oct. 11, 1839.

took shape as the country developed, and the traffic which passes to and from the modern city uses the same old roads, which bear the same old names, as those which Andrew Jackson trod. Crossing the stone bridge from the public square, one might proceed eastward to Gallatin, but he would no longer proceed in the same direction by way of Carthage if he wished to go to Knoxville. Instead he would now take the road by Clover Bottom and the Hermitage to Lebanon and proceed by way of Sparta to his destination. If he turned off to the right before reaching the Hermitage, he could go by way of Murfreesboro into the southeastern part of the state. Southward from the town there was a choice of roads to Franklin, beyond which point the traveler could continue his course to Columbia and along the route of the old Natchez Trace to New Orleans.⁴⁵

As the stage traffic increased along these and other roads, the demand for improved highways grew more insistent. The first turnpike company was chartered in Tennessee in 1801, but such early turnpikes were nothing more than graded roads. In 1831 the first macadamized road was constructed in the state,⁴⁶ and an active demand for turnpikes of this nature immediately made itself felt. This question soon took on a political aspect which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The trade of Nashville was now assuming formidable proportions. A million dollars worth of cotton was exported from the town in 1825.⁴⁷ By 1833 the exports of Middle Tennessee, which passed largely through the

⁴⁵ Clayton, *Davidson County*, pp. 72 ff., "Recollections of Col. Willoughby Williams."

⁴⁶ *Banner-Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833.

⁴⁷ Clayton, p. 205.

metropolis, were estimated at four and a half millions, while the imports were given as three and a half millions.⁴⁸ The merchants who carried on this traffic were among the leading citizens of the town. Their operations were complicated and their business highly profitable. They maintained warehouses in which they stored the crops of cotton and tobacco brought to them by the planters, and steamboats in which they sent these goods down to New Orleans and received fancy groceries and liqueurs in return. They also imported manufactured articles from Philadelphia and operated a shop through which they supplied the country merchants and planters with the articles they needed. They kept open accounts with the planters who were their customers, and the planters turned over their cotton and tobacco to the merchants as soon as the crop was in. The merchants maintained regular relations with New Orleans firms to which the cotton was shipped when the river rose sufficiently in February or March to permit of navigation over the Harpeth Shoals.

The planter who was in need of money at the time when he delivered his crop, received it in the following way. The merchant went to the local bank and drew a draft or "bill of domestic exchange" on the New Orleans firm to which the cotton was consigned. The planter countersigned this draft which amounted to about half the market value of the cotton shipped, and the bank bought it, charging one per cent for acceptance in addition to interest for the time it had to run—which was usually from three to four months. The merchant took his commission and turned the proceeds over to the planter. When the crop was finally sold in New

⁴⁸ *Banner-Advertiser*, Oct. 9, 1833.

Orleans, the draft was taken up in that city and the remainder of the proceeds, minus commissions, was remitted to the Nashville merchant who deducted his commissions and credited the planter with the balance. Thus the planter, the commission merchant, and the bank worked together in the marketing of the crop.⁴⁹

Though the larger commission merchants were the most important business men of the community, they had no monopoly of the local trade. There were many specialized shops, or stores—"iron" stores, book stores, drug and "pain" stores, confectioneries, grog shops, and the important "Dressing Room" where one might purchase "ladies" dressing boxes, musical, work & snuff boxes, curls and puffs, gentlemen's wigs & toupees, clothes, hair, nail, tooth and shaving brushes, pearl, hair and tooth powder, lip salve, court plaster, extracts of rose, lavender, and musk, walking canes, powder puffs, rice paper, & hair pins.⁵⁰

The frontier outpost had grown into a western commercial center whose trade was important and whose life was more or less complicated. The simplicity of the early years was replaced by a society which thought much of dress and manners and social activities. It was a smart, though not a sophisticated, society, and one in which distinctions of class were more obvious than is usual today. As a result of these changes, it was natural that political life, as well as social and economic conditions, should become more complex.

⁴⁹ Clayton, p. 203; T. P. Abernethy, "The Early Development of Commerce and Banking in Tennessee," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIV, 311-25.

⁵⁰ *Banner-Whig*, March 28, 1829.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RISE OF THE WHIGS¹

TENNESSEE, being an inland state, was sore in need of improved facilities for the marketing of her crops. Both means of transportation and better banking facilities were required. This being the case, the planting and commercial classes were not inclined to adopt any doctrine of constitutional interpretation which would prohibit the Federal government from giving aid toward the desired ends. As a matter of fact, Tennessee was in a peculiar position, politically speaking. Since her admission to statehood, the people had with one accord supported the Republican party, and the Jeffersonian tradition was strong. On the other hand, the Federal government had granted statehood and opened the Mississippi; and Tennessee had constituted herself, in a special sense, the defender of the frontier in 1813 and 1815. These facts engendered a spirit of Unionism which was fittingly represented by Andrew Jackson, himself a theoretical Jeffersonian. But when this Unionist Jeffersonian during his presidency took a stand against the construction of internal improvements and the chartering of banks by the Federal government, he flew in the face of the interests of his own state. So strong, however, was the state rights tradition and so powerful was Jackson's military prestige, that his decision was accepted with little complaint, and he carried Tennessee as decisively in 1832 as he had done in 1828.

¹ For a more detailed discussion of this subject see T. P. Abernethy, "The Origin of the Whig Party in Tennessee," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XII, 504-22.

While in the matters of internal improvements and the Bank of the United States, Jackson, as president, went against his earlier opinions and the interests of his state, the switch that he made from a protective tariff advocate in 1824 to a low tariff advocate in 1833 brought him into line with his local constituency on this issue. Cotton was the principal staple of the Volunteer State, and cotton planters had every reason to prefer a low tariff to a high one. Yet there were two reasons to one why Tennessee should have opposed Jackson's presidential policy. That she did not do so is as good an illustration as one needs of the fact that in the course of history economic considerations are often overridden by considerations of a psychological character.

Despite the compelling influence of Jackson's military reputation, there were always a few who would not bend the knee. Colonel John Williams, whom Jackson had defeated for the Senate in 1823, remained an implacable foe, and he had many friends in East Tennessee whose dislike for the Hero could not be offset by the mollifying influence of Williams' brother-in-law, Hugh Lawson White. Nor was Jesse Benton, brother to Thomas Hart, ever reconciled to the General after the luckless imbroglio of 1813. One day in 1827, while Jackson's supporters were holding a banquet in Vauxhall Garden in Nashville, the "immortal sixty-five" met in Decker and Dyer's reading room to register their strong but ineffectual opposition.² Among this number were James Jackson, hopelessly estranged from his friend since that day in 1818 when "Old Hickory" had left him to shoulder the odium attaching to their joint land speculation; Dr. Boyd McNairy, son of John McNairy, the

² *Banner-Whig*, July 7, 1827.

friend of Jackson's youth with whom he had migrated to the Cumberland wilderness; Wilkins Tannehill, mayor of Nashville and leading literary light of the community; and ~~John~~ P. Erwin, son of Andrew Erwin, of the Allison land deal, and son-in-law of Henry Clay. ~~Andrew~~ Erwin was father-in-law of Charles Dickinson, the victim of Jackson's bullet in the famous duel of 1806.

Another opponent was Newton Cannon. It appears that the General had taken a dislike to him when, as a young man, he had voted in the capacity of juror for the acquittal of one of Jackson's enemies. In 1816 Cannon had voted in Congress for the ratification of Crawford's Cherokee treaty which had so offended Jackson.³ This was sufficient cause for a permanent hostility between the two men. Along with Cannon should be classed another congressman, Thomas D. Arnold. He represented an East Tennessee district and reflected the hostility engendered in some elements of that section of the state by Jackson's defeat of Senator Williams in 1823 and by his presidential stand against internal improvements.⁴

In 1827 John Bell' and Felix Grundy were rival candidates for election to Congress from the Nashville district. Since the establishment of the bank of 1820, Jackson and Grundy had never been close friends, though Grundy had done what he could under the circumstances to make himself solid as a supporter of the Hero. It must be assumed that the General had some reason to dislike Bell even more, for disliking Bell's rival, he nevertheless gave him unstinted support in this

³ *Nashville Whig*, July 31, 1819.

⁴ Overton Papers, Thos. G. Watkins to John Overton, May 17, 1827; Jackson Papers, Hugh L. White to Jackson, June 20, 1827.

election.⁵ As usual, Jackson's interference in local politics hurt the cause, and Bell was successful in the canvass. He naturally went to Washington with no great love for the master of the Hermitage.

In 1834 Bell and Polk were rival candidates for the speakership of the House of Representatives. The administration supported the latter, but Bell, who up to this time had been considered an administration man, permitted himself to be elected by the votes of the opposition. This was the beginning of the definite break between him and the Democratic party.

Hugh Lawson White had been Jackson's tower of strength in East Tennessee.⁶ So important were his services that he was generally looked upon as a probable member of the General's first Cabinet. His closest rival for this position was John H. Eaton. Perceiving the situation, Eaton wrote to White stating the General was considering each of them for the War Department and that he would withdraw his claims in case White desired the place. The answer which he received was doubtless what Eaton had anticipated. White replied that he did not wish to lay claim to any office. Eaton received the appointment. White had previously written to Jackson discussing the question of the Cabinet and intimating his willingness to accept a post.⁷ When one considers that White had a following in his own name and that Eaton was merely a creature of the General, considering also the independent nature of the former and the compliant nature of the latter, one cannot escape the conviction that Eaton's manoeuvre was not executed singly.⁸

⁵ Jackson Papers, John Robb to Jackson, Aug. 28, 1827.

⁶ Overton Papers, H. L. White to Overton, May 31, 1827.

⁷ Jackson Papers, White to Jackson, Oct. 4, 1828.

⁸ Jackson's official preference for his personal friends is well illustrated by two

When Eaton resigned and Jackson reorganized his Cabinet in 1831, it was the President's intention to take White out of the Senate and give him the post which Eaton had secured at his expense in 1829. In this way a vacancy would be created in the Senate and Jackson hoped that his ex-Secretary of War might be chosen to fill it. It was in accord with Jackson's habits thus to use his supporters and accommodate his friends. White could hardly have been expected to be enthusiastic over the plan. He urged the illness of his daughter as an excuse for refusing the proffered office, and his sincerity would appear to be attested by a letter he wrote to his friend Overton explaining with convincing candor the domestic situation which made it impossible for him to absent himself from home.⁹ The President and his friends urged the appointment upon him,¹⁰ for his acceptance was essential to their plans, but White steadfastly refused. His refusal was looked upon by many as a sign of un-friendliness toward the administration.

In 1823 David Crockett, as a member of the legislature, voted against Jackson when "Old Hickory" was standing for the Senate. In 1827 Crockett, who made his home in one of the poorer counties of northwestern Tennessee, was elected to Congress. In 1831 he was defeated when he sought reelection, but in 1833 was sent back to Washington for a second term in the House of Representatives. Despite his stand in 1823, he was looked upon as a Jackson supporter during this period, and so he considered himself, but in 1831 a break

letters: Coffee Papers, Jackson to Coffee, Dec. 20, 1830; and *American Historical Magazine*, V. 143, Jackson to Grundy, May 17, 1839.

⁹ Overton Papers, White to Overton, June 15, 1831.

¹⁰ *American Historical Magazine*, V. 133, R. M. Johnston to Felix Grundy, May 12, 1832; *Ibid.*, IX, 85-93, Jackson to R. G. Dunlap, July 18, 1831.

developed between Crockett and the administration.¹¹

James K. Polk, as spokesman for the Tennessee delegation, was urging the cession to the state of the unappropriated lands in the Congressional Reservation, the proceeds to be used for educational purposes. Crockett's district lay within this area, and many of his constituents were squatters upon the unsold lands. The object of the state would have been to secure as high a price as possible for the ceded acreage, and Crockett broke with his colleagues and opposed the cession because he feared that it would result in the dispossession of the occupiers. From this time forward the crude, keen-witted backwoodsman was numbered among the opponents of the administration. In 1833 he won a hard-fought election and went back to Congress, but in 1835 was defeated by an administration man and consequently went to Texas. Those who had supported him presently drifted back into the administration ranks and his defection resulted in no important change in the political situation.

In 1833 a vacancy occurred in the Senate and Jackson once more saw an opportunity to secure the election of the faithful Eaton to fill the coveted place.¹² But Grundy and Ephraim H. Foster came out as rival candidates. To settle the contest it was necessary to ballot fifty-five times. It was only brought to a close, in fact, when Foster, in order to thwart presidential interference, withdrew from the race and threw his support to Grundy, who was elected.

¹¹ *American Historical Magazine*, V, 43-44, Crockett to A. M. Hughes, Feb. 13, 1831.

¹² Grundy forced Jackson to admit his loyalty in the nullification struggle, but the President stated that he did not wish this admission to have any bearing upon the election. Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box G 2, No. 81, Grundy to Jackson, May 6, 1833; *Ibid.*, Jackson to Grundy, May 13, 1833.

The fact that Jackson so consistently failed in his attempts to control state politics shows that he was none too popular with the politicians and that they continued to support him chiefly because their constituents demanded it. If they could have found a favorable opportunity to break with him, many of them would have done so. But neither his opposition to internal improvements, his attack on the Bank of the United States, nor his nullification policy afforded such an opportunity. Tennessee seemed to be willing to follow the President whithersoever he wished to go. This in reality was not the case.

It was Jackson's support of Van Buren for the succession which finally enabled the disaffected elements in Tennessee to come out into the open against him and organize an opposition which took the state out of the ranks of the Democratic party and delivered it to the enemies of its favorite son.

That the people could be so readily turned against their old favorite and hero on this issue is not a little surprising. There was no general hostility against the New Yorker up to this time. While he was a northern man, and northern men were not likely to arouse great political enthusiasm in Tennessee, the state had supported him for the vice-presidency in 1832; and a northern man with southern principles and Jackson's support ought to have gone over very well under normal conditions. It was not Van Buren's domicile, his personality, or his policies, to which the Tennesseans objected. It was Jackson's attempt to have him nominated which they opposed. The people were sensitive of their freedom, and the politicians knew that they could make Jackson appear in the light of a dictator.

The General was getting old; he had been sent to Washington as an apostle of freedom; he had served his turn, but now, his head turned by the possession of power, he was trying to deny the freedom of the people to choose his successor. This was practically the only argument which could have cast the Hero from his pedestal.

It was John Bell who saw the opportunity and made it his own. He knew that, next to Jackson, Hugh Lawson White stood highest in the affections of the people, and he knew that White had reason to be displeased with the General who never failed to serve his personal friends before all others. In 1833 White, while attending a session of the legislature, was approached in regard to becoming a candidate for the presidency. This suggestion he ignored. In 1834 the whole Tennessee delegation in Congress, with the exception of Grundy, Polk, and Cave Johnson, petitioned him to become a candidate, but he still refused. It presently came to White's ears, however, that Jackson had threatened to ruin him if he should accede to the solicitations of the opposition. This stung him to the quick and he announced his candidacy forthwith.

The opposition in Tennessee now had a cause and it had a leader. Its first objective was to capture the government of the state. The new constitution had just been adopted, and Carroll, believing himself to be eligible to reëlection for a fourth consecutive term by this change in the form of government, was seeking the chief magistracy. When the rift developed in the political field, Carroll chose the standard of his old chief though he had received no favors from the Hero of New Orleans since 1816. The opposition chose Newton Cannon to

lead its forces in the gubernatorial race and a spirited campaign ensued, though it appears that the candidates adhered to tradition and refrained from taking the stump.

The presidential question was the principal issue, and White gave his support to the Cannon ticket. Though White still claimed to be a Democrat and a Jacksonian who was opposing the Van Buren candidacy rather than the principles of his old chief, Cannon was known as an opponent of the President, and his strength lay among those elements which were ready to break definitely with Jacksonism. In addition to those superficial people who flew into a rage over the Van Buren candidacy, there were many influential men who had long resented in silence the anti-bank and anti-improvement policy of the Jackson administration. These were the bankers and merchants of the leading commercial towns, and those in the surrounding country who did business with them. These men backed Cannon, and they were able to carry their economic territory with them.

Cannon secured his heaviest vote in East Tennessee. This was due to the influence of White and to the persistent desire for internal improvements which pervaded that economically isolated section of the state. He also carried a compact group of counties in the neighborhood of Nashville, the commercial metropolis of Middle Tennessee, and a similar group surrounding Jackson, the metropolis of the western section of the state. This was sufficient strength to give him the election.

When the presidential election came on in 1836, White's victory was far more complete than had been that of Cannon. The result was due to the fact that White was still looked upon as a true Jacksonian. It was

the General who had deserted the cause, not White. Andrew Johnson, a rising young legislator, voted for White—and there was not a more ardent admirer of Jackson in Tennessee than was the ambitious tailor of Greeneville.

Now that the opposition had captured the state, a line of policy had to be developed. Though White did not admit that he had deserted the old party and though he attracted many truly Democratic votes, the Cannon-Bell following was a Whig following and it was inevitable that the Tennessee opposition should presently take its place under that banner. That this was the case is indicated by the first important legislation passed under the new régime.

The question of internal improvements had always been one of supreme interest to East Tennessee, for, until the railroads brought her relief, Knoxville still had to import her manufactures by wagon from the Atlantic seaboard, and export her produce down the Tennessee River to North Alabama, or around Muscle Shoals to New Orleans. It was economically one of the most isolated regions in the United States, but it was not the only section of the state, by any means, which desired improvements. The first macadamized road, as already stated, was constructed in Tennessee in 1831, and the prosperity which set in about that time added great stimulus to the movement for improved transportation facilities.

In answer to this demand an act was passed in 1836 providing that the state would subscribe for one-third of the stock of any properly organized company which should be incorporated for the construction of turnpike roads. Two or three such companies had begun opera-

tions in Middle Tennessee before the passage of this act, but the movement was greatly stimulated by this legislation, and as a result of it the old system of roads radiating from Nashville to the outlying towns of Middle Tennessee was transformed into a system of turnpikes. East Tennessee, on the other hand, received no aid, for the country was too sparsely settled and the topography such as to render road-building too difficult to be a profitable investment even under the favorable circumstances presented by the legislation of 1836.

The panic of 1837 put a stop to further development of internal improvements for the time being and made it necessary for Governor Cannon, who was re-elected in that year, to sponsor some plan of economic relief for his hard-pressed people. The program proposed and adopted is most interesting and enlightening. In 1820 the new Democracy had established a state-owned bank for the ostensible purpose of relieving the debtors left in financial straits by the panic of 1819. Now, in 1838, the new Whigs established a second state-owned bank for the same ostensible purpose.¹³ The government was to furnish a capital of two and a half million dollars, and loans were to be apportioned among the several counties according to the voting population. The charter failed to provide that a quota not called for in one county could not be transferred to another. Thus it was rendered possible for the commercial counties to get the larger part of the loans in spite of the apportionment provision. Another feature was that only half the funds of this bank had to be used in making such loans to debtors; the

¹³ An interesting Democratic comment upon this institution is to be found in a letter written by Felix Grundy to D. R. Gooch, Jan. 18, 1838, Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box G 2, No. 87.

other half might be used in purely commercial transactions, such as the purchase of bills of exchange. This was the principal business done by the privately owned commercial banks, and the main ostensible object in establishing state-owned banks was to furnish capital which might be used for agricultural loans. Thus the new bank seemed to offer the debtors more than it did in reality. This feature of the institution was, in fact, largely a vote-getting measure, its real objects being for the benefit of the commercial classes rather than for that of the agricultural debtors.¹⁴

Not only were the commercial classes to receive half the loans made by the bank, but the bank was to buy half the stock issued by any duly chartered company engaged in the construction of either turnpikes or railroads. Yet another element of the people was appealed to by the provision that the institution should pay annually one hundred thousand dollars into the common school fund. Thus the bank was to cater to a neat combination of interests, and the state was to furnish the capital and the legislature to elect the directors. It was a clever though dangerous scheme on the part of the Whigs to popularize and consolidate their party in a time of economic distress.

It looked as though they had taken the state and made it their own. The Democrats, under the leadership of James K. Polk, Felix Grundy, and Cave Johnson, were deeply perturbed and decided that a desperate effort must be made to reclaim the government. For this purpose Polk, who had twice been elected speaker of the Federal House of Representatives since his original

¹⁴ T. P. Abarnethy, "Early Development of Commerce and Banking in Tennessee," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIV, 322-23.

defeat by Bell in 1834, was brought back home to contest the governorship with Cannon in 1839. The practice of "stumping" had grown up by that time, and the state received in this year its first thorough canvass by the candidates. The election was of national importance, and Polk made himself famous by defeating his antagonist by a narrow margin.¹⁵ He was a clear, logical, methodical speaker, able in mimicry and not lacking in a sense of humor. He thus had the better of his mediocre adversary in their numerous joint debates.

The returns from this election are indicative of the political upheaval which the state was undergoing. The Whigs lost many counties they had carried in 1836 and 1837, and their following came to be much the same that it had been in the election of 1835. Jackson, Nashville, and Knoxville were once more the focal points of Whig strength, and their power tended to radiate along the lines of communication. The towns were all Whig and the back country was usually Democratic, though local considerations, often of a personal nature, sometimes caused peculiarities in voting habits.

It was clearly a case of commercialism against agrarianism. The trading towns influenced the surrounding country, for the planters were dependent upon the merchants and many lesser men were dependent upon these two elements. Internal improvements was the main issue between the parties, with banks playing a secondary part, and the tariff question being evaded so far as possible by the Whigs. Though they advocated a bank of the United States and Federal aid for internal

¹⁵ Henry Clay spoke of this Whig defeat as "a most disastrous event which . . . is likely to exercise great, if not fatal, influences far beyond the bounds of Tennessee." Clay to Thos. Washington, Oct. 12, 1839, Tennessee Historical Society MSS., Box C 2, No. 94.

improvements, the questions of state aid and state banks were of more immediate importance, and it was in this connection that their policy revealed itself most fully. Not until about 1840 did they bring themselves to make a half-hearted defense of the protective tariff.¹⁶

Slavery had nothing to do with the original alignment as between Whigs and Democrats in Tennessee. There were more planters in the Whig party because there were more planters who had commercial interests; and there were more small farmers to be found in the Democratic fold because they often lived an economically self-sufficing existence and needed neither banks nor improved roads; but the Whigs were as strong in East Tennessee as they were in the central part of the state, and no direct relation can be traced between the party map and the racial map of the state.

In 1840 the Whigs were able to carry Tennessee for Harrison and Tyler by use of the same political "bally-hoo" which they found so effective in other states. The men of important economic interests are never strong numerically, and in order to rule in a democracy, it is necessary for them to find some food for the people. Log cabins and cider turned the trick in 1840, and James C. Jones did a similar piece of business in 1841 and again in 1843. This rustic gentleman had partaken of few advantages and given birth to no ideas, but he developed an efficiency on the stump that made him indispensable to the Whigs in two gubernatorial campaigns. Nominated to run against Polk in both these years, he defeated his dignified and accomplished antagonist by the use of low comedy. In their joint debates he won the decision by avoiding discussion and inciting the yokels to laughter

¹⁶ Phelan, pp. 395-96.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - 1840
A TYPICAL VOTE OF THE PERIOD



Per Cent of Whig Vote.

- 0 to 24%
- 25 to 49%
- 50 to 74%
- 75 to 100%

Nashville Whig, Nov. 30, 1840

by his ribald remarks. Polk had no weapons with which to meet such a disarming attack.¹⁷ Thus did the party of the élite, in order to win proselytes to its cause, resort to a demagoguery which its rival never equalled. One of the interesting facts in southern history is that each party was constantly trying to attract the following of the other, employing for that purpose tactics which would appear to be most foreign to its nature.

Jones was a mere tool in the hands of the Whig leaders,¹⁸ but his two elections gave the party a strong grip upon the state. So strong was it that Tennessee, the home of Houston and Crockett, voted in 1844 against its own son, who was running for the presidency on a platform calling for the annexation of Texas. The decision was close, the scale being turned by only one hundred thirteen votes; yet the outcome is misleading. Tennessee really favored the annexation program.¹⁹ No question could have been better calculated to appeal to the imaginations of such men as fought the Greeks in Alabama and the British at New Orleans; yet party lines were drawn so tightly that not even the combined appeal of imperialism and a favorite son could break through them.

After this election the question of the Mexican War dominated Tennessee politics for several years. The elevation of Polk to the presidency and the ebullition of the war spirit were sufficient to enable A. V. Brown, an old friend and law partner of Polk, to avenge the President by defeating James C. Jones in 1845.²⁰ The rancors caused by the war were largely responsible for

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 393-412.

¹⁸ Phelan, pp. 403-4.

¹⁹ Polk Papers, Adam Huntsman to Polk, Nov. 17, 1844(?)

²⁰ Hale and Merritt, p. 490.

the defeat of Brown in 1847 and the election of a Whig in the person of Neil S. Brown. The successful conclusion of the war was followed by the elevation of a Democratic war hero, William Trousdale, to the governorship, but Trousdale was defeated by a Whig hero, W. B. Campbell, in 1851. By that time the issue of slavery had arisen to complicate matters, and Tennessee politics took another turn.

Yet, in spite of this, the political alignment established between 1835 and 1840 remained without appreciable change until 1861. In all popular elections party lines were tightly drawn, and counties rarely changed their allegiance. Campaign talk generally centered about the old Federal issues of the Bank of the United States, internal improvements, and the tariff, and the chance of anything of immediate consequence being done about any of them was so remote that men could vote their convictions with clear consciences. But when the questions which actually came home to the people were approached, the situation was different.

For instance, until 1831 the law of the state had been that only regularly licensed taverns might maintain bars and sell liquors at retail to be drunk on the premises. In that year the legislature repealed this law and provided for the licensing of grog shops. This resulted in a great increase in the amount of drinking.²¹ In 1838 the Whig legislature repealed this licensing law and restored the older practice of allowing only taverns to sell drinks.²² Finally, in 1846, a Democratic assembly restored the license law and the grog shops were again opened for

²¹ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1837, pp. 795-99, Report of joint committee on tippling houses.

²² *Nashville Whig*, Dec. 4, 1839.

business.²³ The votes on these measures did not follow the regular partisan cleavage; yet Whig and Democratic administrations were consistent in adhering to the opposite sides of the question. In spite of the irregular vote, this might therefore be considered a partisan question. Yet both parties were careful not to adopt such new issues as parts of their platforms. They cautiously stuck to the old, well tried, and relatively harmless questions. Even on such important—nay, paramount—questions as state aid to internal improvements, the parties stuck consistently to their respective positions, as is instanced by the repeal under Polk in 1840 of all laws providing for such grants. Yet the issue was largely avoided during campaigns, and the votes dealing with it in the legislature did not follow the regular line of division.

²³ Phelan, p. 424.

CHAPTER XX

JOHNSONIAN DEMOCRACY

ANDREW JOHNSON was born of humble parentage in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1808. At an early age he was apprenticed to a tailor, but he ran away and finally his wanderings brought him, at the age of eighteen, to the little town of Greeneville in East Tennessee. Here the tailor's trade proved to be profitable, but Andrew had a restless, though untrained, mind and an ambitious nature. The "mechanics," as all handicraftsmen were called at that time, formed a distinct, appreciable, and relatively intelligent class in all the western towns, but their position was a peculiar one. However poor and ignorant a backwoods farmer might be, he did not work for wages and was a member of the all-powerful majority. Therefore the politicians courted him. A rail-splitter might even be elected president of the Republic. But a tailor's position was less elastic. His class was not numerous enough to be politically powerful, and the fact that he labored for wages disqualified him for social advancement. A Lincoln might wear baggy trousers and a grizzly beard and glory quietly in his pioneer background. An Andrew Johnson might dress with scrupulous neatness and use classical allusions in his speeches; he might boast a thousand times of having been a tailor, but it was as a member of a persecuted class that he spoke.

Though the mechanics were not numerous, they formed a compact group with a grievance, and the young tailor of Greeneville saw the possibilities of the

situation. Making himself the spokesman of his kind, he succeeded in being elected an alderman of the town in 1828, and two years later was chosen mayor, serving in that capacity for several years. In 1835 he was elected to the lower house of the state legislature, and during the next year voted against the bill which provided state aid for internal improvements. East Tennessee was too much interested in the development of communications to stand for this, and Johnson was defeated when he stood for reëlection in 1837.¹

His position on this question is most enlightening. He had grown up under the influence of the Jeffersonian tradition, and was always, in theory, a firm believer in its principles. In addition to this, he was an ardent admirer of Andrew Jackson, and an ardent partisan. In these things he never changed fundamentally, but he was also a politician and was capable of modifying details to fit circumstances.

East Tennessee having profited little from the act of 1836, Johnson was reëlected to the legislature in 1839. He now modified his views on the question of state aid and served to the satisfaction of his constituents.² In 1841 he was sent to the state senate, and it was here that his ideas began to unfold. Two proposals of his made at this time reveal his attitude with wonderful clarity. One of these advocated the establishment of a new State of Franklin to be created out of East Tennessee and the adjoining parts of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia.³ The other advocated the apportionment of

¹ John Savage, *The Life and Public Services of Andrew Johnson*, pp. 26-29; O. P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, p. 234; G. F. Milton, *The Age of Hate*, pp. 74-75.

² R. W. Winston, *Andrew Johnson, Plebeian and Patriot*, p. 34.

³ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the Senate*, 1841-1842, p. 495; *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1841-1842, p. 663.

Tennessee's representation in Congress on the basis of white population only, without taking into account the Federal ratio in laying off the congressional districts.⁴ Both these plans would have worked to the advantage of Johnson's own part of the state, and they show clearly that he realized the distinct interests of the non-slaveholding population of East Tennessee as opposed to those of the slaveholders of the western section of the state.

Such measures were naturally not popular with the majority of the politicians, but Johnson avoided isolation by another stand which he took during this same session of 1841. The Democrats had thirteen members in the senate, constituting a bare majority, but in the house they were in a decided minority. Federal senators were to be elected and a joint ballot would have returned Whigs. The thirteen Democrats in the senate prevented a joint session of the houses and the Whigs refused to compromise. The result was that the state was unrepresented in the upper house of Congress for two years. Johnson took a leading part in these proceedings,⁵ and his stand marks him as a partisan in spite of his free-lance ideas. It kept him solid with his organization and in 1843 he was elected to the Federal House of Representatives.

For ten years Johnson served as a member of that body. During his long incumbency he does not appear to have distinguished himself for his ability or for his lack of it. His speeches certainly were not good, but they were probably no worse than the average. A sample of his oratory sounds queer for an ex-tailor, but it followed the grandiloquent model set by the "eagle orators" of his day. In speaking on the Oregon question, Johnson had the following to say:

⁴ Winston, pp. 35-37.

⁵ Phelan, pp. 408-9.

A great deal has been said in this debate about the British lion. Let him but growl, let him assume a menacing attitude, and on some lofty peak in Oregon,—perchance Mount St. Helen's, 15,000 feet above the ocean-level,—the armor-bearer of Jupiter will be found perched on its veriest summit, with talons more formidable than the glittering spear of Mars, with an eye which does not wince, though coming in contact with the sun's brightest ray; the British lion will be descried in the distance, if he shall dare approach, and if he shall moor to our shore, he will descend from his elevated position, and issuing a scream of bolder defiance than he has ever before heard, will strike terror to his heart, and cause him, cowering and shrieking beneath his penetrating talons, dastardly to retreat, with the reeking blood dripping from his mane, from a soil that he has dared to pollute by his impious tread. We will not track him in blood around the globe, but we will drive him forever from this continent.⁶

Being a good Democrat, Johnson did not admit the power of Congress to make appropriations for the construction of internal improvements, but being a good East Tennessean, he tried to get something for his section when such appropriation bills were before the House. As a Democrat, he opposed the protective tariff, but he opposed the revenue tariff on sugar and coffee also because it fell too heavily upon the poor, and proposed a tax to be levied on invested capital. He was accused of being a demagogue, but there can be no doubt of his sincerity. The mechanic and the farmer were ever uppermost in his mind, and his dislike of banks and capitalists was from the heart.

His stand on the question of slavery gives, perhaps, the best insight into his political character. He supported the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War; but, on the other hand, he favored the Compromise of 1850, and

⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., I Sess., XV, 289.

while the question of slavery was being constantly agitated in Congress, he seldom raised his voice in defense of the institution. When he was heard, however, it was in answer to abolitionist attacks, and he defended the constitutionality and the necessity of the system. On such occasions he betrayed the dread of the free Negro which the poor whites entertained. Though himself a slave-owner, he never, while in Congress, advocated the extension of slavery or defended the righteousness of the institution on abstract grounds.⁷ His position was a natural one for an East Tennessean, and it would have been a more natural stand for the yeomanry of the southern Democratic party than that which was actually adopted under the leadership of the planter-politician.

While in Congress, Johnson's most significant work by far was the introduction in 1846 of his homestead bill. He believed that the government should grant farms outright to poor settlers, and he opposed any disposition of the public lands which would interfere with this program. Not even in his own state did his party support him on the question, but he stood his ground and continued to agitate for his scheme. At first he found little sympathy anywhere, but the North gradually came around to his support, and his bill finally passed the House of Representatives in 1852. It was then killed in the Senate, but it did not altogether die. He deserves much of the credit for the final adoption of this measure, and his work in this one cause should entitle him to a high place among the constructive democrats of the nation.

In 1853 the Whigs gerrymandered his district and threw him out of Congress. But the Whig votes which they added to his constituency in order to accomplish

⁷ *Nashville Daily Union and American*, Aug. 15, 1856.

this object deprived his Whig neighbor of a majority also, and the two lost their seats together. It happened that both men favored the homestead bill, and it is not unlikely that this fact may have had an important bearing upon the action taken. Johnson bade farewell to his colleagues, ascribing his defeat to his land policy, and shortly became a candidate for governor of Tennessee. The politicians of the state, the leaders among whom, both Whig and Democratic, were of the upper classes, had no love for this fiery and uncouth upstart from the lower orders, and if they had had their way, he would never have been nominated. But the people had learned to use their voices on occasion, and Johnson, the democrat, had captured the heart of the farmer as well as that of the mechanic. Mass meetings were held, according to custom, in many counties, and Johnson's name was the most popular among all those considered for the chief magistracy of the state.⁸

The Democratic convention met in Nashville in April, 1853. On the night before it was organized, a caucus assembled and proceeded to ballot on the possible candidates. Three votes were taken and Johnson far outran all the others, but his strength fell off somewhat on the last roll call. Before the convention met the next day, an agreement was reached among certain of the leaders to support Andrew Ewing for the nomination, but when the business of the meeting began, Johnson's friends rallied and showed much strength. Ewing's name was put in nomination, but he presently withdrew it, and all other nominees except Johnson also withdrew. Johnson did not attend the convention in person. It seems that Ewing had formerly advised him to become a

⁸ *Daily Union and American*, April 25, 1853.

candidate, and that he had said he would leave the matter in Ewing's hands. Johnson has often been accused of having tricked Ewing out of the nomination and forced himself upon the convention in this way. It is clear that such is not a true representation of the case. Johnson knew his strength with the people and his weakness with the politicians. He well knew that his best policy was to absent himself from the convention and to make no claims upon its members, but to let the county meetings speak for him. The politicians knew his strength and wished to defeat his nomination, but their attempt to consolidate upon Ewing failed even before that gentleman saved himself a humiliating defeat by refusing to run against the people's choice. There being no other candidate before the assembly, Johnson was nominated by a unanimous vote, and he accepted the standard without expressing any appreciation to the body which had chosen him.⁹

For the first time since the days of William Carroll, the people had chosen their candidate. Johnson's nomination shows how a democracy may assert itself in case it is aroused, and it shows what an enormous advantage a man of the people has over the professional and amateur politicians of the usual type. Considering this fact, it is passing strange that such a man is one of the rarest phenomena of our great Republic. In times of political unrest demagogues put on sheep's clothing and operate the government for the benefit of themselves and their employers. In times of political quiescence, the ruling minority can assume the reins of government

⁹ Phelan, p. 438; *Daily Union and American*, April 28, 1853; W. M. Caskey, "First Administration of Gov. Andrew Johnson," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, I, 43-59.

more directly. The ante-bellum South produced no other man who could rank with Johnson as a spokesman of the people; one who had their point of view and worked unceasingly and genuinely in behalf of their interests. It is curious that he stands so alone in this rôle and that his reputation has profited so little from the real work of his life.

The Whigs nominated to run against Johnson the man who had taken a leading part in gerrymandering him out of Congress—Gustavus A. Henry. Campaigns were carried on in those days by holding in all parts of the state a series of joint debates between the candidates. It necessitated several months of nerve-racking labor, and a strong constitution was required to endure it. Johnson not only had such a constitution, but was possessed of dauntless courage and unwavering strength of purpose. He was not a well-informed, logical speaker such as Polk, nor yet a jocose entertainer such as Jimmy Jones. He was ponderously and ineptly oratorical; but it must be said for him that instead of discoursing on national issues which were removed from the every-day interests of the people, he fought for a definite program of practical reform, and it was a program peculiarly his own.

His white-basis apportionment ideas of 1841 were used against him by his opponent. He himself stressed his homestead program. He also advocated an amendment to the Federal constitution providing for direct popular election of the president and vice-president, popular election of senators, and appointment of supreme court justices for terms of eight or twelve years instead of during good behavior.¹⁰ This shows that Johnson was a

¹⁰ *Daily Union and American*, June 3, 9, 10, 16, 1853; *Nashville True Whig*, May 11, 1853.

thorough believer in the Jacksonian type of democracy. He was more original when he brought up the subject of education and advocated a tax for the support of a system of public schools.

The results of the election are interesting. Johnson won by several thousand votes, which was a decided gain for his party in a state where party lines were so tightly drawn. Notwithstanding this fact, the majority was against him in both East and West Tennessee, the election being decided by the relatively heavy ballot which the middle section of the state cast in his favor. In other words, the vote followed the usual party lines, despite all the new issues. Only a few counties changed sides, and Johnson carried only one more than his party had carried two years previously.¹¹ A few scattered counties here and there were enough to turn the scale in almost any election, and Johnson had the popularity to secure those wavering votes. By this fact he redeemed the state from a period of Whig control which had been interrupted since 1835 by the election of only three Democratic governors. But this victory cost the Democratic party its old leadership. There was little in common between the ideas of such men as Jackson, Grundy, and Polk on one hand, and those of Johnson on the other. The tailor had stolen the party from its captains and he meant to use his victory in his own way. That Jacksonian ideas were still popular, however, is shown by the adoption in 1853 of an amendment to the state constitution providing for the popular election of judges and prosecuting attorneys.¹²

Johnson undertook his first administration under the

¹¹ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1853-1854, p. 47.

¹² C. A. Miller, *Official and Political Manual of the State of Tennessee*, p. 100.

handicap of a divided legislature, the senate being Democratic and the house Whig. In spite of this fact, he was able to secure the passage of his bill providing for the levy of a tax for the support of education.¹³ The yeomanry of East Tennessee had long wished for such legislation, but the planter-class leadership of the other sections of the state had prevented it. This was the first levy of the kind in Tennessee, and it should rank with Johnson's homestead bill as one of the most constructive contributions to the growth of democracy.

Other legislation passed during his term is almost as significant. Under his leadership the legislature appropriated funds to assist in the organization of county, regional, and state agricultural societies, which were to hold fairs for the exhibit of agricultural and mechanical products of the state. A state board of agriculture was created to supervise the work and Johnson became ex-officio president of the body. In this capacity the Governor served faithfully, and a stimulus was given to the industry of the state by his work.¹⁴

The mechanics had long complained that the state penitentiary competed unfairly with them by training its inmates in the handicraft trades. Johnson naturally sympathized with their point of view and proposed that the institution should be moved to some central point where iron could be produced by the convicts, thus furnishing a material which was needed for the construction of railroads and relieving the mechanics of competition.¹⁵ The legislature did not agree in this matter, and no changes were made in the penitentiary system.

¹³ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1853-1854*, p. 140.

¹⁴ *Daily Union and American*, March 18, April 22, 1854.

¹⁵ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1853-1854*, pp. 293 ff.

It had for years been the custom to require the citizens to work the roads. In 1827 an act had been passed compelling owners of slaves to work as other men were required to do, showing that slave-owners had been in the habit of having their share of the labor performed by their Negroes.¹⁶ Johnson now proposed to go a step further. He said that the men who used the roads the least had to perform the most labor upon them, and proposed that a road tax be levied in lieu of requiring the performance of labor. This, he thought, would let the burden fall more equitably. Naturally no such legislation was passed at that time.¹⁷

Though Johnson was always a vigorous defender of the mechanic class and though his point of view was somewhat narrowed by this strong predilection, he was not a bigot. His reasonableness is shown by his advocacy of a reduction of the relatively high tax merchants had always been required by the agricultural rulers of the state to pay for doing business.¹⁸ It is further shown by the establishment, under his influence, of a state library which still exists and which, because of its early origin, now possesses one of the best historical collections in the South.¹⁹

In 1852 the Whig administration, under the influence of the railroad mania of the period, reversed Polk's decision of 1840 and appropriated several millions of dollars to be loaned to the companies undertaking construction of rail lines. It was left largely to Johnson to carry out the provisions of this legislation. In 1835 he had opposed similar legislation, but later had modified

¹⁶ Caruthers and Nicholson, *Compilation of the Statutes of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1836), p. 637.

¹⁷ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1853-1854, pp. 293 ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Winston, pp. 80-81.

his views. His action now coincided with his more recent stand. He knew the dangers inherent in the plan and, being always an advocate of governmental economy, dreaded to see the rapid increase in the public debt which this program involved. The best he could do, however, was to administer the law and counsel moderation.²⁰ Johnson, the politician, was not incapable of making concessions.

He wished the state to withdraw entirely from the banking business and leave the field exclusively to privately owned institutions, but it was a part of his plan that the currency issued by such houses should be guaranteed by a safety fund.²¹ These ideas were not adopted by the legislature, but they show where Johnson really stood on such economic questions. He adhered to the old Jeffersonian principle that the government should not engage in business, but believed that the state should regulate business in the interest of the people.

Much important legislation was passed because the Governor was able apparently to lose sight of the old partisan questions, which pertained primarily to the Federal government, and confined his attention to local legislation which was not of a strictly partisan nature. This happy circumstance was due not to any lack of partisan feeling on the part of the Governor, but to the fact that he had the courage to attack practical problems which the parties had always tended to skirt, and to avoid Federal problems, often of little immediate practical importance, which the parties had always

²⁰ *Daily Union and American*, Feb. 10, 1854; *Nashville Daily News*, Feb. 22, 1859, Comptroller's report.

²¹ Tennessee Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1853-1854, pp. 293 ff.; *Journal of the Senate*, 1855-1856, pp. 55 ff.

tended to stress. In this manner they had kept their lines tight, for a man could vote in the traditional way without obviously violating his economic interests. By attacking practical problems, Johnson was able to overstep party lines.

In 1855 he was renominated by the Democrats without opposition, but he did not attend the convention and it failed to pass resolutions giving his first administration whole-hearted endorsement.²² The Whigs held no convention, but accepted the nominee of the Know-Nothing party, Meridith P. Gentry. Gentry was an old-line Whig who had split with his party and refused to support Scott in 1852. He had served for some time in Congress. The excitement caused by the novel issue of this campaign was considerable, and the state witnessed another heated contest.

The stand taken by the Know-Nothing party against foreigners and Catholics was upheld by Gentry with great ardor. He was answered with equal warmth by Johnson, who had once objected to the opening of the sessions of the legislature with prayer on the ground that this was injecting religion into politics.²³ He never wavered in his stand that the two should be kept entirely separate. He also insisted that the Know-Nothing plan of requiring a twenty-year term of residence for foreigners before they could be naturalized was nothing but a return to the principle of the Alien and Sedition laws.²⁴

Another novel issue of the campaign was the question of prohibition. The adherents of this cause had recently organized in the state and they presented questionnaires

²² Nashville *True Whig*, March 20, 1855; Winston, pp. 82-83.

²³ Winston, p. 32.

²⁴ *True Whig*, April 2, May 11, 1855; *Union and American*, June 2, 1855.

to both candidates asking whether they would support legislation forbidding the sale of intoxicating liquors. Both men gave unsatisfactory replies, but the prohibitionists decided that Gentry was the more amenable of the two and threw their support to him.²⁵

The Kansas-Nebraska bill also came in for discussion. Bell, the leading Whig in Congress, had voted against it. Johnson stood by his party and defended it.²⁶ In the light of later events, this alignment of the two great Tennessee partisans is not without a touch of irony.

Johnson was elected for a second term by a larger majority than that which he had received in his first canvass, but the alignment of the counties changed very little. He once more lost East Tennessee and West Tennessee, but piled up a sufficient majority in the central region to overcome his slight deficiency in the other two sections. His greatest losses were in the towns and such strong Whig centers as Davidson County, while his greatest gains were in the backwoods counties.²⁷

It seems strange indeed that Johnson, the leader of the proletariat, and his backwoods supporters took the liberal attitude at that time, while the Whig aristocracy of the commercial communities stood for intolerance, thus reversing the situation as it exists today. The only answer would seem to be that the foreigners then generally gave their support to the Democratic party, and Johnson and his following had inherited the Jeffersonian tradition. On the other hand, the Whig merchants and planters constituted an aristocracy of a kind, but it was not, after all, a very cosmopolitan brand of that article.

²⁵ Nashville *Daily Gazette*, April 28, 1855; *Daily Union and American*, Aug. 17, Sept. 4, 1855.

²⁶ Savage, pp. 46-47; Winston, p. 84.

²⁷ *Daily Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1855.

Once more Johnson's legislature was divided between the Whigs and the Democrats. A considerable spirit of factionalism was shown in their early proceedings, but once more harmony was restored by the practical nature of the Governor's program. The policy which he pursued during his second administration was but a continuation of that followed during his first term. It does not, therefore, require separate discussion.

In 1856 the Governor threw the whole weight of his prestige into the fight for Buchanan, and the state was carried for the Democratic candidate for the first time since 1832. It is usually taken for granted that the disruption of the Whig party at this time was responsible for the result, but Fillmore, the American or Know-Nothing candidate, had as his vice-presidential running mate Andrew Jackson Donelson, nephew of the great Andrew, and private secretary to his uncle-in-law during his presidency. Donelson had been partly reared at the Hermitage and the strongest bonds of affection had existed between Jackson and his young protégé, who was a man of considerable worth and ability. He had served as minister to Prussia and had also represented the United States in Texas, successfully carrying through the delicate negotiations which paved the way for the final annexation.²⁸ This was a strong ticket in Tennessee, and it is highly probable that it would have carried the state except for the powerful personality of Johnson.

With this great triumph to his credit, the Governor began to look toward the Federal Senate, and it would seem that an understanding was reached among the politicians of the party as to his election to that body. At any rate, he refused a third nomination for the governor-

²⁸ Sketch by T. P. Abernethy in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

ship and supported the party's choice, Colonel Isham G. Harris, to succeed him. Harris was a slave-owner of West Tennessee. He had achieved considerable reputation as an orator and party leader during the recent presidential campaign, but he was a typical scion of the planter aristocracy and his nomination and Johnson's support of him meant a sharp turn back to the right for the Democracy of Tennessee. Though the people could produce one leader, they could not raise up a successor to carry on his work. Nor did that leader seem to think it was necessary to have a successor.

Having aided in the election of Harris and procured, for the first time, a legislature which was Democratic in both houses, Johnson was elected to the Senate of the United States. Having aroused the people to his support, having seated his party firmly in power after a long period of Whig rule, and having worked faithfully for four years in the interest of his constituents, the tribune governor turned the reins of authority over to the aristocracy and made his way to Washington. Such were the exigencies of party rule.

For four years Tennessee had enjoyed a recess from the old issues. Johnson had brought forward issues of his own making, which represented a definite attempt to meet the needs of the local democracy. The advent of Harris meant not only a reversion to conservatism but a reversion to the old questions. The state platform which the Democratic party adopted in 1857 had a strangely antiquated sound. It condemned the distribution of the national revenues arising from the sale of the public lands, objected to the protective tariff, and anathematized the construction of internal improvements by the Federal government. It also condemned discrimina-

tion against Catholics and immigrants, while the Whig platform of the same year adopted the Know-Nothing attitude on this subject.²⁹

The year 1857 brought a panic and a suspension of specie payments by the Tennessee banks which confronted the Harris administration with a practical problem. Yet it was a practical problem on which the two parties had traditional stands to maintain. Andrew Jackson had struck only at the Bank of the United States, leaving the state banks untouched by his condemnation, but his specie circular was a step in the direction of a hard-money program. Van Buren and his sub-treasury had apparently committed the party to the hard-money policy, and that had been the traditional attitude ever since. It was common for Democratic editors, in times of financial stringency such as that of 1857, to condemn all banks and to declare that gold and silver coin was the only constitutional money. It is not clear whether the Democratic leaders ever believed that the country could have functioned on a purely specie basis, but it is clear that they never tried to put this theory into practice. Most of the Tennessee banks had been chartered by Democratic administrations, and in every such case they were given the right to issue paper money. These notes were likely to be less sound than the issues of a Federal bank, so that the followers of Jackson could certainly not claim to have done anything to improve the soundness of the currency.

So far as overt acts are concerned, the two parties had manifested but little difference in their respective attitudes on the monetary questions. Why then was there so much political talk about banks and currency? In

²⁹ *Republican Banner*, April 17, May 2, 1857.

order to answer this question it is necessary to point out that the Democratic party in Tennessee was made up, in the main, of backwoodsmen, but that these backwoodsmen were led by men of the upper economic classes. When hard times came, it was easy to tell the bucolic population that the banks were responsible for their troubles. Jackson had started that kind of appeal, and it always worked well. The back-country farmer did business on a small scale. When he sold a cow and took bank notes in payment, he found that these notes were not legal tender for the discharge of his own obligations, and they were likely to depreciate on his hands. Furthermore, the banks were run by that aristocracy of the towns which the honest farmers were taught to hate with a fervent hatred.³⁰

The charters of banks invariably required that they should redeem their notes in specie, and a suspension of specie payments therefore constituted sufficient ground for the revocation of the charter. If the Democrats had been as much opposed to banks as they pretended to be, they could have dealt with them in short order after the suspension of 1857. What they did was typical. They gave vent to much talk about banks in general, and passed an act requiring a resumption of specie payments by a certain date; but a joker was attached to the bill so that it was of no real effect and the banks were actually allowed to resume at their leisure.³¹ In spite of this, there was a certain feeling within the Democratic ranks that something should be done to regulate the banks more

³⁰ For an idea of the general situation see, T. P. Abernethy, "The Early Development of Commerce and Banking in Tennessee," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XIV, 311-25.

³¹ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1857-1858*, pp. 30-31; *Nashville Daily News*, July 7, 1858.

effectively. Economy and financial retrenchment was a perennial plank in the platform, and bank regulation was a legitimate and reasonable feature of any such scheme. In 1852 the Whig administration had passed a "free banking" act which provided for chartering under general statute. Any company which could put up fifty thousand dollars in capital stock and meet with certain other conditions was allowed to organize a bank. It could issue notes, but any such issue was to be covered by an equal amount of bonds to be bought and deposited with the state comptroller.³² During Johnson's administration this system was strengthened by requiring that, in case the value of the bonds should decrease, the banks should make sufficient additional purchases to cover this shrinkage.³³ The great Democratic governor never ceased to urge that the state should dispose of all its banking capital and leave the field entirely to private enterprise. This stand was in accord with Jeffersonian principles, but it represented a different brand of democracy from that which Felix Grundy had championed in 1820, and it certainly did not manifest any hostility to banks in general.

Johnson's plan of having the state go out of the banking business was not adopted by the legislature, but one of the results of the panic of 1857 was that the free banking act was repealed during Harris' administration.³⁴ It is not at all clear that this was really a progressive move. It is certainly more democratic to permit the incorporation of banks under general statute than to confine

³² *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1851-1852*, p. 151; Hale and Merritt, pp. 358-59; Moore and Foster, I, 441.

³³ Moore and Foster, I, 459.

³⁴ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1857-1858*, pp. 30-31, Moore and Foster, I, 468.

operations to a few favored institutions. It would seem that its repeal was merely a concession to the spirit of hostility toward the banks which a period of suspension never failed to engender.

Yet the Democrats were not entirely without ideas of reform. In 1860 the legislature passed the most thorough-going bank reform act which the history of the state records. It was now at last required that there should be a regular and systematic inspection of the books of all banking institutions to the end that their issues should be strictly limited and promptly redeemed.³⁵ But the reform came too late to demonstrate its merits. The War of Secession burst upon the country and the Tennessee system went down in the general cataclysm.

³⁵ *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, 1859-1860*, pp. 18-21.

CHAPTER XXI

SLAVERY AND SECESSION

THE SERVILE population of Tennessee was not sufficiently large to enable the question of slavery to dominate its politics as it tended to do in the lower South, but it was large enough to have an important bearing upon the history of the state. A detailed study of the secession movement in Tennessee leads inevitably to the conclusion that the attitude adopted in various quarters on this crucial question depended directly upon the proportion of slaves to white people in the community concerned. It is, therefore, important to take note of the racial distribution within the commonwealth.

East Tennessee had comparatively few slaves; yet the broad valley of the Tennessee River and its tributaries running centrally through the section from Bristol by Knoxville to Chattanooga had an appreciable Negro population. In Middle Tennessee, the blue grass country of the Cumberland basin was the stronghold of the "peculiar institution," but just eastward from this region and connecting with East Tennessee was the "mountain district," in which there were as few slaves as in the Cumberland and Great Smoky ranges. Lying opposite between the middle and western sections of the state there was a broad strip of country, flanking the Tennessee River as it runs northward into Kentucky, in which the land was poor and slaves few. Beyond this, in the southwestern corner of Tennessee, was the richest cotton country of the state and here the Negro

population was greater than in any other quarter.¹

The question of slavery played scant part in the political life of Tennessee prior to the War with Mexico. The fact that the state was carried against Polk in 1844 indicates that matters connected with slavery had not assumed a leading rôle, but the Wilmot Proviso had its effect here as elsewhere and in 1848 the portentous question first played an important part in a presidential election in Tennessee.²

From this time until the outbreak of the War of Secession, the question was never dropped. Since the people had been aroused, the politicians had to make the most of the situation. This the leaders of each party invariably tried to do by showing that their own organization was more orthodox on the burning question than was that of the rival group. In such a contest the Democrats had the advantage, for the northern wing of the party could show a better record than could that of the Whigs. This is one of the main reasons why the party of the small farmers in the South became the aggressive champion of slavery while the Whigs assumed a compromising attitude on the subject.

There were, however, other factors involved. In spite of the oft-painted picture of the slaveholder as a migratory person, the facts do not bear out the tradition. While the slaveocracy, between 1816 and 1836, did expand into the new country and occupy the Gulf coast as far west as Texas, it is true of this people as of others that the more substantial elements among them were less migratory than the poorer ones. Extensive

¹ A. C. Cole, *The Whig Party in the South* (Washington, 1913), Map in Appendix gives relative strength of white and Negro population in 1850.

² Phelan, p. 432.

establishments are more difficult to move than are smaller households, and social status is hard to carry with one into the wilderness. The planter aristocracy was anything but migratory in its habits. The histories of families of this class would hardly show an average of one move per generation during the period that elapsed between the Revolution and the War of Secession. The thinking of such people was not based upon the expectancy of migration. This is certainly true of the period after 1836 even though the period before that date may furnish some exceptions to the rule.

This being the case, the wealthy slave-owner was not economically interested in the opening up of new slave territories. The increased demand for labor caused by the exploitation of new country would tend to cause a rise in the price of slaves. The planter often bought slaves but did not commonly sell them. He therefore stood to lose by such a change in value. The development of new territory would also throw a larger quantity of cotton upon the market. This would tend to reduce the price of the staple, and again the planter was the loser.³ Thus there is small wonder that the Whig party, containing a large proportion of the planters of the South, was not enthusiastic over the extension of the institution of slavery. Yet they were as much opposed to the abolitionists as were the Democrats, and often advocated non-intercourse with the North as a means of retaliation for their agitation.

While all this is true, it is also true that the Democratic leaders, slave-owners themselves, did not perceive the force of these economic factors, and strove to win converts to their cause from the ranks of the Whigs by taking

³ *True Whig*, Feb. 12, 1850.

an aggressive attitude in favor of the expansion of slavery. Another factor which influenced them was the strong hatred of the Negro existing among the poorer whites, as well as the desire of such people to become owners of slaves. Certainly this element did not wish to make free men out of the slaves however little they had in common with the planters. It requires all these facts to explain the strange spectacle of the party of the slave-owners maintaining a mild attitude on the subject of slavery while the party of the small farmers pursued a belligerent policy on the question of the extension of the system into the territories.

The Nashville convention of 1850 was a spot-light thrown upon the sentiment of the southern people regarding slavery. The situation which it revealed in Tennessee was not very different from that existing in Georgia and others of the more conservative southern states. When the excitement over the admission of California became intense and Mississippi called for the meeting of a southern convention at Nashville, some of the leaders of the Democratic party in Tennessee came out boldly. They would resist northern aggression "at all hazards and to the last extremity,"⁴ and they gave the convention movement their hearty support. The Whigs, as in other states, held off, for they recognized the radical tendencies of the agitation. They, in fact, bestirred themselves to warn the people against precipitate action.⁵

The situation which developed in Nashville is indicative of the general state of affairs in Tennessee. The Whigs having control of the upper branch of the legislature

⁴ *Ibid.*, March 9, April 16, 1850.

⁵ *Ibid.*, March 21, 23, 30, April 9, 13, May 21, June 11, 13, 18, 1850.

SLAVERY AND SECESSION

not voting against anything to which his party stood committed.

The returns showed the old Whig district of East Tennessee, of which Knoxville was the center, staunchly opposed to the convention. The Democratic area to the northeast went over with Johnson to the cause of the Union excepting Sullivan County, which had, since 1835, been the strongest Democratic center in that section of the state. Southward of the Knoxville district one of the old Democratic counties voted for the convention, but the great majority of them voted against it. East Tennessee was almost solid, yet a trace of the old partisan feeling was still to be discovered.²⁹ Middle and West Tennessee went for the convention with two important exceptions. The "mountain district" voted heavily against it, and so did a compact group of counties lying along the Tennessee River in the western section of the state. These were regions of poor country and few slaves. Both were normally Democratic, as the character of the population would indicate. It was clearly a question of the slaveholding against the non-slaveholding sections in this election.

The convention was defeated, but presently Fort Sumter was fired on and Lincoln called for troops. To the people of the North, the firing on the fort looked like southern aggression; to the people of the South, the president's call for troops appeared in the light of northern aggression against the South. Up to that time Tennessee had refused to take any steps looking toward separation. The argument of the local Whigs that Lincoln had been legally elected and should be so recognized was accepted by the state for which John

²⁹ Fertig, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

action of Congress on the compromise. Before separating, however, they provided for a second meeting to convene in Nashville after the rising of Congress.¹⁰

This second convention met on November 11, 1850, but, except for the Tennessee delegation, the more conservative elements absented themselves. The result was that the session fell under control of the radicals. Secessionist resolutions were drawn up and adopted without debate, the Tennessee delegation alone voting against adoption.¹¹ While even this delegation could not maintain its attitude with a united front, its leading members, A. V. Brown, A. O. P. Nicholson, General Gideon J. Pillow, and A. J. Donelson, were strongly opposed to radical action and did all that lay within their power to defeat it.¹²

The people of Tennessee, led by the Whigs, had made it clear that they were ready to accept the compromise of 1850, and the Democrats reaped no glory from their connection with the convention. A. J. Donelson had at first taken a leading part in promoting the movement, but he ended by condemning its work. Other prominent Democrats were put in an equally embarrassing position.¹³

The dissensions which this agitation set up within the local Democracy contributed largely to the defeat of Governor Trousdale in 1851 and the election of the last Whig governor of the state, William B. Campbell. So decisively had the voice of public sentiment spoken against radical action that the question of slavery was not again to cause serious trouble within the state until

¹⁰ Herndon, p. 226.

¹¹ *True Whig*, Nov. 24, 1850; Herndon, pp. 230-32.

¹² *True Whig*, Nov. 16, 26, 1850; Sioussat, "Tennessee and National Politics, 1850-1860," *American Historical Association Report*, 1914, I, 253.

¹³ Phelan, pp. 434 ff.; *True Whig*, Aug. 1, Sept. 3, 24, Oct. 12, 15, Nov. 19, 1850.

the election of Lincoln reopened the whole matter. John Bell voted against the Kansas-Nebraska bill while Andrew Johnson favored it, but Johnson's administration as governor was not marked by agitation of the slavery question, and even Isham G. Harris, while maintaining the principles of the Dred Scott decision, frowned upon the idea of secession until the fateful election of November, 1860.¹⁴

The Tennessee representatives in the Charleston convention were instructed for Andrew Johnson and they failed to withdraw when Yancey led his Alabama delegation from the assembly. They attended at Baltimore when the convention reassembled, but refused to take their seats when the delegates who had withdrawn at Charleston were refused admission. Meeting then with the southern wing of the party, they joined in the nomination of Breckinridge and supported him in the following election.¹⁵

During this period the Whigs of Tennessee had shown no enthusiasm for the extension of slavery into the territories. Their platform of 1857 was carefully worded to avoid the issue,¹⁶ and they were silent as to the merits and demerits of the Republican party when that body came into being. Their old Nashville organ was known as the *Republican Banner*, and they even began to refer to themselves occasionally as Republicans.¹⁷ This situation was changed when Seward made his "irrepressible conflict" speech. The Tennessee Whigs took it to indicate that the object of the new party was war upon the institu-

¹⁴ *Republican Banner*, March 1, 1860.

¹⁵ J. W. Fertig, *Secession and Reconstruction in Tennessee*, p. 15; Marguerite B. Hamer, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860 in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, III, 3-22.

¹⁶ *Republican Banner*, May 2, 1857.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 19, 1859.

tion of slavery rather than merely opposition to its extension into the territories, and from that time forward they found nothing in common with the Republicans.¹⁸ Being thus left alone, they took a leading part in the organization of the Constitutional Union party and the nomination of John Bell for the presidency.

In the elections of 1857 and 1859, which had placed Harris in the gubernatorial chair, the old party lines had been slightly disarranged. The only important change, however, was that the group of counties around Memphis, which had heretofore been strongly Whig, swung over to the Democratic party.¹⁹ Since this was the strongest slaveholding section of the state, one might assume that the question of slavery was involved in the change. Memphis, however, was Harris' home, and he was the first governor from the western section of Tennessee. The local nature of the change would indicate that this local factor was sufficient to explain it. This conclusion is further borne out by the result of the election of 1860, for Bell carried the state in that year and his vote was not only a straight Whig vote, but it was one which differed in no important respect from the Whig votes of the preceding twenty years.²⁰ Hardly a county varied from its traditional stand because of the peculiar circumstances which surrounded that momentous election. The fact that the old Whigs were able to accomplish this result after the eclipse which recent years had cast upon their fortunes, bears out once more the conservative nature of Tennessee opinion on the subject of slavery.

As soon as Lincoln's election became known, Tennessee

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 25, 1859.

¹⁹ *Union and American*, Aug. 21, 1857; *Nashville Daily News*, Sept. 9, 1859.

²⁰ *Republican Banner*, Dec. 4, 1860.

was confronted with the question of secession. South Carolina's precipitate action forced the issue upon the people of the South and it became necessary for Governor Harris to take a stand. Meetings were held by the Democrats in various counties for the purpose of urging him to call the legislature into special session.²¹

One such gathering was summoned to meet in Knoxville on November 26, 1860. It appears that the people of East Tennessee were uncertain in their attitude toward the question at issue.²² The element favorable to secession was expecting to have its own way at the meeting, but the opposition assembled and prevented the taking of a vote on the question of the special session of the legislature. The meeting adjourned without action and called another convention to meet at the same place on December 8.²³ When the adjourned meeting occurred on that date, under the leadership of Brownlow, O. P. Temple, and other local Whigs, it took strong ground for the Union.²⁴

Temple, who took a prominent part in all these proceedings, believed it was the timely action at Knoxville which turned the scale in East Tennessee and defeated the secessionist cause in that quarter of the state.²⁵ The Whig leaders who produced the result were practically all slave-owners.²⁶ Johnson was the only prominent Democrat of the section who went over to the cause of the Union,²⁷ and while his influence was powerful, he was at his post in Washington during this exciting December and hence unable to take part in the local struggle.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 1860.

²² Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, p. 18; Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee*, pp. 34-36. ²³ Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee*, p. 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-50.

Despite the miscarriage of plans in East Tennessee, the governor issued the call for a special session of the legislature and that body, on convening, passed an act authorizing the people to vote on the calling of a state convention. Though there was no way of foretelling what such a convention might decide to do in the circumstances, it was known that secession was being contemplated and that the calling of a convention might result in such action. Therefore those who favored the Union opposed the convention,²⁸ and the popular vote upon the question affords an excellent index to opinion on the subject.

This referendum occurred in February, 1861, and, with the single exception of the vote on the constitution of 1834, it was the only popular election held up to that time which affords a clear-cut reflection of economic conditions. The presidential election of the previous November was one of the best examples that could be found of the tenacious character of political alignments which often hold over from generation to generation with little regard to changing issues. This vote of February, 1861, manifested an almost complete breakdown of partisan alignment, and it therefore betrays the real thoughts of the people on the issue of secession. The explanation of this peculiar phenomenon is that the matter involved was not, nominally, a partisan one. It is true that the Democratic leaders generally favored, and the Whig leaders generally opposed the call of a convention, but the question was presented to the people at a special election and therefore it was isolated from all ordinary partisan considerations. Moreover the electorate was not asked to commit itself to any definite program of action. A Democrat who voted against the call was

²⁸ *Union and American*, Dec. 10, 1860.

not voting against anything to which his party stood committed.

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²⁹ Fertig, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Bell and Andrew Johnson were the leading spokesmen.³⁰ But the call for troops instantly changed all this. Harris sent Lincoln word that Tennessee would not furnish a man for the coercion of her sister states of the South, but would put fifty thousand into the field to prevent such coercion.³¹

The legislature was called into special session for the second time within the year, and that body was asked to take action appropriate to the emergency. The result was that on May 6 an act was passed submitting the question of secession to popular vote,³² and a resolution was adopted which completed a military alliance between the state of Tennessee and the Confederate government.³³ The vote cast on these measures in the house of representatives is not without significance. All Middle and West Tennessee, except Davidson and two counties in the valley of the Tennessee River, favored them. In the eastern section of the state the vote followed rather closely the old partisan alignment, the old Democratic counties favoring and the Whig counties opposing the action of the assembly.

Although the governor and the legislature had taken the reins into their own hands, a popular referendum on the *fait accompli* of secession had been ordered, and the election was held in June, 1861. The question now presented was quite different from that on which the people had voted during the preceding February. Then they were asked merely to express an opinion. Now they

³⁰ *Republican Banner*, Nov. 7, 13, Dec. 6, 1860.

³¹ *Union and American*, April 18, 1861.

³² *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, Second Extra Session, 1861*, p. 8; *Union and American*, May 9, 1861.

³³ *Tennessee Assembly, Journal of the Senate, Second Extra Session, 1861*, p. 17; *Public Acts of the State of Tennessee, Second Extra Session, 1861*, p. 21.

were called upon to support their state government. The result of the election was by no means as free from partisan influence as had been the case in the preceding poll.³⁴

Once more Sullivan County stood alone in the northeastern corner of the state against Johnson and the Whigs, but the old Democratic counties of the southeast returned to their allegiance, and supported secession. Yet the most striking change was in the mountain district of Middle Tennessee. This area, traditionally Democratic, had voted against the convention in February; now it supported secession. The backwoods-men of the Democratic party, except in Johnson's district, were standing by their guns and against their economic interests. These facts tend to prove that the stand taken by East Tennessee during the War of Secession was not due to the instinctive hostility of the small-farmer population to the institution of slavery, but to the stand taken by their leaders in the struggle. And why was it that these slave-owning politicians of East Tennessee sided with the Union? The answer is that they had always been Union men, both Whigs and Jacksonian Democrats; they had always denied the right of secession, and their interest in slavery was not sufficient to bring them over. Their section would lose but a small amount of property if slavery, contrary to their expectations, should be destroyed in the struggle, and it might gain freedom from the political dominance of the western section of the state, which had been endured but never relished since the time of John Sevier.

The case of Andrew Johnson is peculiar. He had supported slavery because he was a Democrat, because

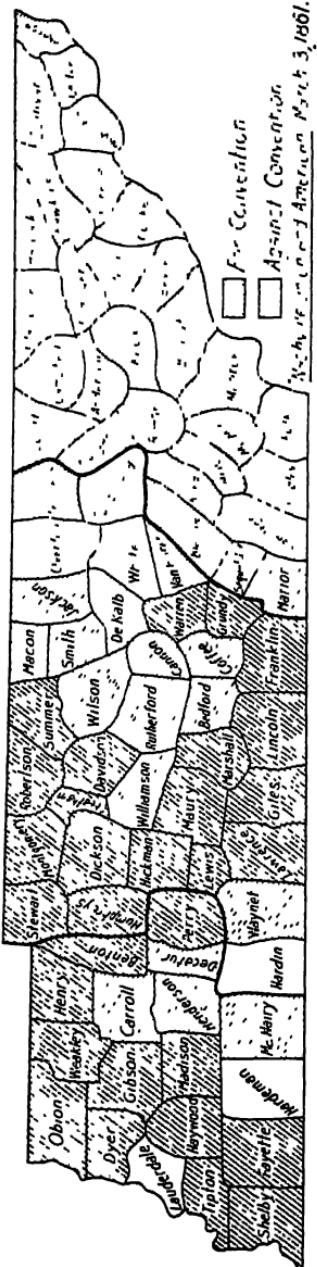
³⁴ Fertig, p. 27.

he could not retain his status in the party if he had taken any other course, and because the slaveless whites, the people for whom he spoke, hated the idea of a free Negro population. But always, deep in his heart, he had hated the aristocracy of the planters to which he was alien; he had always loved East Tennessee and resented the subordination of his own section in the politics of the state. When the opportunity came and he saw his chance to free himself and his section from the domination of western Tennessee and its planter aristocracy, he did not hesitate, nor did he consult with his constituents.

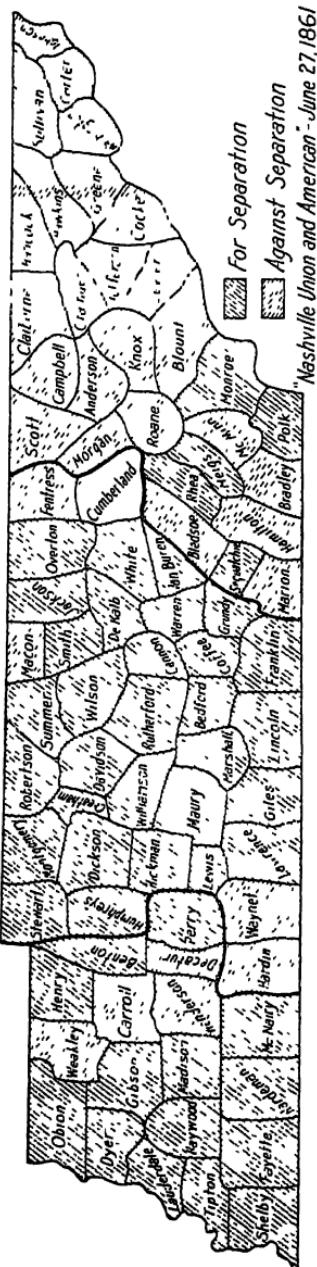
Middle and West Tennessee voted almost solidly for secession except for a strip of country running across the state at the junction between the two sections. These poor Democratic counties, once almost isolated in a Whig section, seem to afford the only recognizable example in the state of spontaneous Unionist sentiment on the part of the small farmers. This peculiarity is hard to explain unless it be due to the fact that the yeomanry here was sufficiently isolated to have a kind of solidarity, and yet sufficiently near to the habitat of the slaveocracy to have a definite dislike of it. It seems that a class consciousness had been developed under these unusual circumstances which cannot be shown to have existed in any other part of the state. Barring the possibility that some now-forgotten leader may have been responsible for the stand, there is but one other conceivable explanation. Temple says that in Greene, Johnson's home county, many Whigs came out in favor of secession when Johnson took the side of the Union. This, according to him, was the only county in the section where such a thing occurred.³⁵ It is possible that a similar situation existed

³⁵ Temple, *Notable Men*, p. 40.

ELECTION RETURNS ON CONVENTION - 1861.



ELECTION RETURNS ON SEPARATION - 1861.



in the group of West Tennessee counties. They had long been Democratic and their neighbors had been Whigs. When their neighbors jumped the fence and came out for secession, the Democratic counties may have followed a natural impulse to remain on the opposite side of the question.

In the fall of 1861 Harris once more ran for governor, this time against General William Polk. The campaign was carried on under most unusual circumstances occasioned by the outbreak of the War of Secession, but the distribution of the vote was almost the same as that which was cast in June on the question of secession.³⁶ Middle and West Tennessee were almost solid for Harris, and East Tennessee showed once more the only well marked partisan alignment which the state could afford. Except for the defection of Johnson, the Whigs and Democrats would apparently have held their lines intact in this area, and it might even have gone through the war with little change in its political geography.

The solidarity of Middle and West Tennessee in favor of secession was due to the strange fact that the non-slaveholders of those sections merely followed their party in its attitude on the question, while the Whigs followed their economic interests which happened to lead in the same direction. John Bell has been accused of inconsistency in having opposed secession until it was accomplished and then giving his support to the movement. But Bell was quite consistent, and his point of view was entirely sound. He, along with most of the Whigs, opposed the agitation of the slave question and secession, for they were slave-owners and their property was safe in the states so long as secession was not resorted

* *Union and American*, Aug. 15, 1861.

to. But when Lincoln called for troops and it was clear that a war was looming, he knew the interests of Tennessee were in line with the interests of the other slave states, and that they would have to make common cause in defense of their property and against the extra-constitutional powers assumed by the Federal government.³⁷

Thus were the sons of the frontiersmen who had worked for admission to the Union divided on the question of taking Tennessee out of the sisterhood. This left the state internally bleeding while fighting for what she deemed her freedom.

³⁷ *Republican Banner*, April 19, 24, 25, 1861.

CHAPTER XXII

REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

IT WOULD be impossible to find four men who better represent the development of American democracy than William Blount, the North Carolina Cavalier, Andrew Jackson, the protégé of William Blount, James K. Polk, the Achates of Andrew Jackson, and Andrew Johnson, the plebeian, who followed no man.

During the years when the Regulator trouble was brewing in North Carolina, a stream of Scotch-Irish Protestants moved down the Valley of Virginia and settled the Watauga Valley of North Carolina. A small band of Carolinians from the Alamance region, acting under the leadership of James Robertson, coöperated in founding this distant settlement. The colonization of the trans-Appalachian region has usually been pictured as a result of the Regulator trouble—as a retreat before oppression and an escape into the freedom of the wilderness where lands were plentiful and men could be their own masters.

The facts do not bear out this view. The Regulators were too poor, too ignorant, and too devoid of leadership to strike so deep into the trackless wilderness. There is no tangible evidence of any connection between the two movements. On the contrary, it seems highly probable that Robertson, like Boone, was acting under the influence of Richard Henderson during these years. It is certain that the Shelbys, the Seviers, and other leaders from Virginia were seeking lands rather than

freedom when they moved into the Watauga country.

The Watauga people organized the first government which existed among English-speaking people west of the Appalachians, but neither the association of 1772 nor the committee of 1776 represented any insatiable craving for freedom. The transmontane settlers were more anxious to have the protection of existing governments than these governments were to grant it, and both these early western organizations were created by a resourceful people, in default of any other political institutions. In neither case was there any idea of independence. The established jurisdictions were not only recognized but courted.

The identity of interests between the Scotch-Irish of the transmontane and *cis*-montane settlements is manifested by their coöperation in the Patriot cause during the Revolution, and it is enshrined in the victory at King's Mountain. Men who could plan their own campaigns, choose their own leaders, and win their own battles without the slightest dependence upon established authorities were of a different breed from the poor leaderless mob which fled the field of Alamance. The wilderness trail was not blazed by such as they, who merely followed where others had shown the way.

Our first transmontane frontier was opened up by the land speculators and their followers. Eastern politicians worked in coöperation with western Indian fighters and surveyors. These two elements not only planted the settlements, but they controlled their policies and their politics after they were established.

That the Cumberland settlements were planted in this way through the coöperation of James Robertson and Richard Henderson is well known, but that the

Watauga settlements were founded under quite similar circumstances has not been generally recognized. The part played by Henderson, the failure, in the drama of the West has been well advertised, but there followed a greater than he who was indeed the empire-builder of the Southwest. That man was William Blount.

The recognition of American independence in 1783 brought Blount to the front as the master-politician of his state. In coöperation with Richard Caswell, he helped to formulate a plan whereby the western domain of North Carolina, which was presently to become the state of Tennessee, was opened to sale for so brief a time that its choicest lands fell almost exclusively into the hands of the politicians who passed the legislation under which they profited. This situation created a community of interests among those who participated in the undertaking, and enabled the Blount-Caswell group to wield an enormous influence over such men as sought fortunes in western soil.

Having accomplished so much, Blount's next move was to secure the cession of the western country to Congress so that it might be taken out of the hands of an unstable state government and preserved more safely for its owners. He and his associates, having got the lands thus, turned over to the Federal government the job of protecting them against the Indians and the Spaniards.

The first result of this move was to call the State of Franklin into being. The westerners were led to feel that North Carolina had deserted them, and they had every reason to believe that they were free to set up an establishment of their own, subject to the authority of Congress. It is clear that there was at first no thought of rebellion, but North Carolina, temporarily repudiating

the Blount-Caswell leadership, repealed the cession act, and the State of Franklin became a rebel government against its will.

Sevier, who was engaged at the time with Blount and Caswell in an attempt to settle the Great Bend of the Tennessee, retained the governorship of the rebel state in order to prevent its government from interfering with the land claims held by himself and his North Carolina friends. He accomplished his purpose, and his administration, which in the eyes of the world appeared to end in complete failure, really ended, in the eyes of his backers, in complete success. The Franklin movement has usually been looked upon as a manifestation of frontier democracy. If it had been this, it should have repudiated the land claims of the speculators and established a liberal form of government. It was Sevier who defeated both these movements. The land claims were left untouched, and the conservative constitution of North Carolina, in preference to a liberal one, was adopted by the Franklin government after a bitter struggle.

When the question of adopting the new Federal constitution presented itself, Blount heartily espoused the cause and sat as a member of the Philadelphia convention. With his usual sagacity, he saw in this movement a chance to secure a strong arm for the protection of the frontier. But his enemies, who had gained the upper hand in North Carolina when the cession act was repealed in 1784, still retained their power and were able to defeat the adoption of the new instrument of government when it came up for ratification in 1788. In this extremity, Blount's western supporters made overtures to Spain, apparently hoping that

they might frighten the state into the adoption of the constitution, or, failing this, secure concessions from the power that controlled the mouth of the Mississippi and the outlet of prospective western commerce. This affair, usually termed a conspiracy, was certainly not a conspiracy against the Union, which North Carolina had not then joined. It was a conspiracy against the government of North Carolina, but it was apparently directed by two of the most important politicians of that state.

It was not this scheming, however, but the adoption of the Federal constitution by the required number of states which broke the opposition in North Carolina and brought the state into the Union. The final cession of the western lands was the immediate consequence of this Federal victory. Blount's objective had at last been attained, and he, as a fitting reward, was appointed head of the territorial government provided for the ceded lands.

The success of this Bourbon governor in administering his wilderness jurisdiction is one of the most striking testimonials of his ability. But it was through Robertson and Sevier that he kept the frontiersmen reasonably quiet in spite of the fact that the Federal government not only withheld aid, but forbade their taking vengeance upon the murderous Indians who constantly preyed upon them.

When the time arrived for the Territory to assume the toga of statehood, a constitution was drawn up which provided for virtual manhood suffrage in the election of the governor and the assembly, but for the appointment of practically all other state and county officials. Not only this, but land was to be taxed at a flat rate regard-

less of value, and the provision of the North Carolina constitution of 1776 requiring officeholders to believe in God, a future state of rewards and punishments, and the divine authority of the Old and New Testaments, was retained except for the final clause. Thus religious and economic conservatism maintained themselves on the frontier with little abatement in the face of the much-vaunted democracy of the West.

The Revolutionary period, under the stimulus of eighteenth-century philosophy and political necessity, had gone far toward relieving the people from the tyranny of the colonial administration whereunder the rich ate bread in the sweat of the poor man's brow; but the government was not yet in the hands of the people. It was not men of real principles such as Thomas Person or Samuel Johnston who controlled the situation in North Carolina during the struggle for independence. It was practical men such as Caswell and Blount who wielded the sceptre and used the government for the promotion of their own interests. Working through the medium of an ignorant electorate and a host of political allies, they kept the situation well in hand. Their objective was the exploitation of the public lands, and their whole policy was bent toward that one end. The picturesque frontier colonels were in their service no less than the local politicians of the east. In fact, the West, more sparsely settled and more intent upon elemental problems of subsistence, was rather more easily exploited than were the older communities, and it is impossible to see that democracy made any real progress on the frontier between 1769 and 1796.

In contrast with the turbulence of this earlier period, the years elapsing between 1796 and 1819 were marked

by political quiescence. Pinckney's treaty of 1795 gave rest to the Spanish and Indian troubles on the border, and the economic development of the western country, for the first time, went forward smoothly and rapidly. The old leaders, who had gained their reputations during the Revolutionary period, retained their prestige, and the preoccupied frontiersmen accepted without question their guidance in political as well as in military matters.

Nothing was more in demand in the new country than strong leadership, and political office fell as a natural heritage to those who commanded in other fields. Thus the colonels, the majors, and captains of the militia were likely to hold most of the civil offices as well as most of the land warrants. When a Sevier, a Robertson, a White, or a Bledsoe became a candidate for public place, it was rare that he faced any opposition. His more humble neighbors trusted him and elected him. He, in turn, accepted the office as his natural right, and both he and his constituents considered that he was graciously performing a patriotic service. At the same time, he thought it perfectly natural, as indeed it was, that he should use his position for his private advantage, and the laws which were passed almost invariably favored the economic interests of the few. The officeholder called himself a public servant. In reality he served himself.

Campaigning for office during this period was unknown. Public position carried dignity and respect, and official titles were highly regarded. With the coming of the year 1819 all this was rapidly changed.

The panic which struck the country at that time brought universal financial disaster to all West Tennessee as well as to the western region in general. The men who had recently come out and had bought lands

at high prices were unable to pay for them, and ruin stared them in the face. An effective majority of the people found themselves in this predicament, and their demand for legislative relief could not be ignored. It was Felix Grundy who saw the opportunity and seized it. The result was an orgy of relief legislation. Nor was this manifestation by any means confined to Tennessee. A similar situation pervaded the whole country south of New England.

As usual, however, the relief legislation did not relieve, and the people soon lost faith in it. At this juncture William Carroll was elected governor of Tennessee. He was a Nashville merchant who had lost heavily in the panic, and he had no faith in relief laws. His platform was one of economy and retrenchment. Business on a specie basis was his ideal. Though he was not opposed to banks, either state or Federal, he insisted that they should conduct their business conservatively, and inflation was anathema to him.

While Carroll was a merchant with conservative economic principles, he was also a reformer with progressive ideas. The great work of his long tenure of office was the framing of a new constitution which, in 1834, liberalized the political institutions of the state and abolished the old iniquitous system of taxing land without regard to its value. It was he who, between 1821 and 1835, established "Jacksonian Democracy" in Tennessee.

As for Jackson himself, he was not really a part of this movement. He had begun his political career during the territorial period as a protégé of William Blount. He had learned his lessons under that master and in that school, and his ideas never changed fundamentally. To him office was the birthright of the strong, and to be used

for the promotion of one's personal interests. However much he later learned to talk about "the people," he never really thought of office except in a personal way. His idea of democracy was that his wishes represented it and his election embodied it. In emulation of Louis Quatorze, he might have said, "I am democracy."

On the expulsion of Blount from the Senate in 1797, Jackson fell heir to his toga, both in the Senate and as a leader of his cohorts in Middle Tennessee. Blount's tactful guidance was soon missed. Jackson fell into a violent quarrel with Sevier, and was not able to maintain himself politically. He was a man of action rather than of ideas, and life in Congress was evidently distasteful to him. After a brief experience in Philadelphia, he voluntarily retired to the relative obscurity of a country merchant and a rustic judge. He also engaged in planting and got himself elected general of the militia. In 1804 he resigned from the judiciary and, at about the same time, wound up his mercantile operations, devoting himself then exclusively to his agricultural and military interests. There seemed to be small chance that the world would ever hear of this lean, aggressive, irascible Scotch-Irish country gentleman.

As a state politician he had been a failure, but the Battle of New Orleans, and that alone, made him a presidential possibility—as Yorktown elevated Washington, as Buena Vista elevated Taylor, as Appomattox elevated Grant. Both he and several astute politicians realized this, and from that time forward his eyes were focused upon the Federal City, though he did not admit the fact. Presently the West had grown strong, the Virginia Dynasty had grown stale, and the people had grown restive. The democratic movement was on foot

and the masses were demanding governmental recognition. But the masses, as they ever are, were ignorant and gullible and, frontiersmen as many of them were, they loved a military hero. Jackson was their man, and a group of keen and unscrupulous practitioners of the art of fooling the people put him over as the anointed prophet of the new order.

He had opposed the election of Carroll in 1821. Though his economic ideas were the same as those of the great governor, and though he found it expedient to espouse the political reforms characterizing Carroll's incumbency, he had no interest whatever in the humanitarian movement which was in full tide during the period. Nearly all his friends and advisers were either conservatives of the old school or sharpers of the new order. He was the figurehead rather than, in any real sense, the leader of the democratic movement which bears his name.

During his first candidacy for the presidency, he represented the interests of Tennessee and the West, favoring protective tariff and Federal aid for internal improvements. He manifested no hostility to banks, but feared an inflated paper currency. He was, theoretically, a Jeffersonian Republican. Actually he was a believer in strong central government.

Before his election in 1828, the spell of Van Buren had been cast over him, and, as president, his policy played into the hands of the New York-Virginia-Georgia combination, and his own state followed him with hardly a murmur until 1836. Meanwhile he had made many enemies among the local politicians, and his championship of Van Buren for the succession gave them a chance to overthrow him. It was the commercial

interests, hostile to Jackson's bank and improvement policies, which enabled them to accomplish their object, and the result was that the opposition party in Tennessee came to have its strongholds in the centers of trade.

The next period, of which James K. Polk is the typical figure, was characterized by a closely balanced partisan situation. Rivalry for office became keen; canvassing for votes became the rule, and demagoguery became rampant. The national questions which were agitated upon the stump usually had a very indirect bearing upon state politics, and men voted with little regard to the issues involved. The partisan alignment having once been established, it was maintained with little change into the next generation. The frontier had made way for the plantation, and the militia colonel had been replaced by the lawyer and the professional politician. In Jackson's day the General himself was a colorful representation of the frontier spirit of his party. In Polk's day, the comfortable planter was in control of the party of the people, and it came to represent the interests of the slaveocracy. Jackson's presidential policy had, indeed, pointed it in this direction. Naturally no great progress was made in the cause of democracy between 1836 and 1853. This is almost certain to be the case when political lines are tightly drawn and politicians can depend upon an unthinking traditional support.

In 1853 Andrew Johnson was elected governor of Tennessee, and a democratic revival began. It was similar to the movement of the Jackson period in that it sought to put political power more directly into the hands of the people, but it was altogether different in its spirit and leadership. The earlier movement was

general; this was local and personal. It had its origin and its life in the person of Andrew Johnson. American standards are democratic in so far as they permit one to rise easily in the social scale, but this privilege is denied to a few. Johnson was one of that few. Andrew Jackson, the pioneer and planter, was never possessed of class consciousness. Andrew Johnson, the tailor, never escaped it. He was the only true and outstanding democrat produced by the Old South, for he never was absorbed into the privileged class; he never ceased to be one of the people. Though he knew the tricks of the politician, and often used the methods of the demagogue, he never erred from his purpose of improving the condition of the masses, politically, economically, and intellectually.

In general elections the party lines held fast throughout Johnson's administration, but he was able to break through them on matters of legislation because his program was new and practical, and, therefore, non-partisan. But by this time a dreadful force was raising its head in the land, and before it the old parties were soon to topple and fall.

Tennessee had always been a Unionist state, and Jackson had enshrined the tradition. It remained Unionist through 1860, but seceded when called upon to assist in the coercion of states with which her interests were allied. The slaveholding Whigs of the western section felt that they could not, in this crisis, maintain their Unionist principles, but those of East Tennessee, where slaves were few, saw the issue differently. The yeomanry of the Democratic party throughout the state, though possessed of few or no slaves, tended to follow its leaders into secession except in the old congressional

district of Andrew Johnson. So strong were the ties which bound men to their masters.

In marshalling the events which trace the development of democracy on the North Carolina-Tennessee frontier from the Revolution to the War of Secession, certain peculiarly interesting facts stand out with arresting clarity.

The "Patriots" of the Revolution who denied the right of Britain to tax her dominions have usually been given credit for speaking in the name of democracy. In reality they spoke for merchants whose trade was threatened, for politicians who wished more power, for speculators who wished more land. They did not desire war. They hoped to secure concessions by making threats, but they were playing with the whirlwind and they reaped the tempest.

They spoke volubly of the equality of all men. But they established a franchise more exclusive than had been that under the royal government. They solemnly insisted on separation of church and state. But they wrote into the first constitution of their own making a provision that none should hold office under the state who denied the existence of God or the truth of the Old and New Testaments. They stoutly maintained that government should be of, for, and by the people. But they did not submit the new constitution to the people for ratification, and that instrument was not only ominously silent on the questions of amendments, modes of taxation, and the disposition of the public lands, but it established no system of courts.

Presently the men who had been so anxious to see George III lose his title to the domain, turned their attention in larger numbers to the transmontane part

of the new commonwealth. The men who dominated the councils of North Carolina largely dominated the frontier, and their interest was in the land. The frontier is most aptly characterized not by the cry of the frontiersman for more freedom, but by the cry of the speculator for more land. The Seviers, the Shelbys, the Robertsons, were not simple pioneers seeking homes in the wilderness. They were daring adventurers seeking fortunes in the public lands.

The first offspring of the West was not democracy, but arrant opportunism. The frontiersman, in the main, was a fitting subject for exploitation. Ignorant and simple as he often was, he could not comprehend abstract ideas of economics. By the time such principles were visualized for him, he found himself shackled with laws adverse to his own interests but for which he himself had voted. No better illustration of this fact could be had than in the curious spectacle of the rebel State of Franklin adopting, under the crafty manipulation of the land speculators, the constitution of North Carolina.

The frontier spawned other evil offspring as well. While it gave men freer play for the exercise of individualism, at the same time it took them out of contact with cultural influences and established the crass and superficial equalitarianism of the Jackson period for the relatively conservative but constructive ideas of Thomas Jefferson. Men of education and refinement who moved to the frontier were forced to pare their cultural standards down to meet those of their neighbors. Mental distinction did not help a man to fell a tree or kill a wolf; therefore, culture, along with all else not of immediate service in the wilderness, was despised as useless and effete.

By retiring to the West, men not only escaped the influence of education, but that of the church also. The circuit riders who sought them out in the far reaches of the forest had few points of contact with the frontiersmen. Only an emotional appeal could move them, and, as a consequence, a crude, emotional effervescence came to take the place of spiritual concepts and gracious living.

In the early stages, education suffered through the indifference, later through the greed, of the speculator-politicians. The strongest indictment which can be made of our early oligarchy was in this mercenary disregard of learning which starved the schools and left the people in ignorance. Naturally the leaders had little interest in educating those who were to be kept in subjection; the poor had little interest in maintaining colleges which were looked upon as institutions existing for the benefit of the sons of the rich; and the West, which had gotten out of touch with culture, had a contempt for that which it did not understand. Thus the people were left without schools during the formative period of the state, and higher education finally fell, by default, into the hands of the Protestant churches which gave to it an unctuous and dogmatic tone.

It is true that the western leaders were relatively simple in their social habits. New country usually deprives men of the physical means of supporting aristocratic establishments, and pioneers will not often brook lordly manners on the part of their leaders. But Sevier, for instance, who used his sword for the protection of the border, used the influence gained by his military reputation for the support of a very undemocratic political and economic régime.

That the voice of the people was negligible during the early years of the frontier is clearly shown by the statutes which were enacted. These were not only notoriously discriminative in favor of the privileged classes, but they were, on the whole, remarkably intelligent. Such statutes are convincing proof that no real "democracy" existed, for, give the masses control of the government, and invariably their first move is to enact their own ignorance, prejudices, and customs into the law of the land. Exploiters, on the other hand, enact only such laws as will serve their own ends, occasionally bartering to the people some privilege which should be theirs by right.

In these exploiters who controlled or sought to control the government from the time of the Revolution onward, we find the prototypes of the two classes perennially active in American politics: the legalists who had no need to circumvent the law because they could control the legislation; and the extra-legalists or illegalists who must needs hurdle law-made obstacles because they enjoyed no such privileges as did their competitors. But whether legalists or extra-legalists, the rich and the powerful rose to the top, and, while they sometimes draped Democracy's coat over the figure of Greed, they managed to keep economic legislation securely in hand. When the transmontane area acquired territorial status, there was William Blount, the greatest speculator-politician of them all, in the executive chair; and there in the seats of the territorial council were five great captains of speculation. When statehood was acquired, there in the Federal Senate was Blount, from which vantage-point he continued to direct the destinies of the state almost as long as he lived; and there in the political

offices at home were the men most closely bound to him by ties of blood and friendship. When he passed from the scene, his mantle fell on those of his followers who were trained under his tutelage.

This detailed study of legislation and political development leads to the sorry conclusion that whichever party was in power—whether Conservative or Radical, Tory or Whig, Federalist or Anti-Federalist, Democrat or Whig—the governing body as a rule was more responsive to the interests of the lawmakers than to the welfare of the people. Occasionally a leader single of purpose and sincere in his service came forward to lead the people, such as Thomas Person, William Carroll, Andrew Johnson. But these were strangely solitary figures among a horde of officeholders completely dedicated to self-advancement. With unthinking devotion the people, like confiding children, docilely followed their self-appointed leaders and their party banners regardless of changing times and changing politics. The political manipulators retained support by avoiding practical matters and stressing standardized issues. If the perennial planks appeared to be wearing thin, other devices were found to hold the people true. Sometimes catchwords, log cabins, and hard cider did the work. At other times low comedy accomplished it. To expose the clay feet of their idols had little discernible effect on the people, who lovingly expurgated from memory any unwelcome evidence concerning their heroes and seated them as securely as ever on their pedestals. Indeed, so closely did democracy cling to its leaders and so tenacious were voting habits and political traditions, that we find the strange phenomenon of men voting against their own economic interests without regard to changing

issues. The ideal of a public actually thinking and acting for itself has had no reality in American political history except, to some extent, during crises when new issues of such immediate urgency arose as to divorce them from all partisan considerations. Such crises shook the old foundations and brought about new alignments in 1776, during Jackson's administration, and likewise between 1854 and 1861.

It was the panic of 1819 which gave the people their first taste of power. Floundering in the sink-holes of debt and despair, they rose up and demanded relief. So pressing was their cry that it was answered. Thereafter the genteel exploiters of the old régime no longer had their will of the people. They had serious competition from increasingly large numbers of charlatans and demagogues who were more successful in cajoling the public. From that time onward, the type of leader was apt to deteriorate. An electorate fed on the idea that all men are equal would naturally be unable to discriminate between a James C. Jones and a James K. Polk. In the period under review, Tennessee can show only two prominent politicians of truly democratic bent and constructive programs; and the only real progress made in democracy during all these decades was the work of these two men.

Democracy was never applied in politics, but it was applied in things of the intellect. The uncultured frontier accepted political leadership, but repudiated intellectual leadership and made one man's opinion as good as that of any other. Our civilization has been coarsened and cheapened as a result.

Thus, under varying circumstances, from the Revolution to the War of Secession the government remained

in the hands of a few. The frontier produced no exception to the rule, nor did Jacksonian Democracy bring about any fundamental change in this respect. Concessions had to be made from time to time; the people were gradually given the form and semblance of power, but they still lacked the substance of sovereignty, and the few still ruled the many. At first they did it through their personal prestige, then through the demagogue, and finally through partisan organization. It is now done through a combination of the party, the press, and the pulpit, but all roads lead to Rome. This has been the evolution of our "democracy."

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